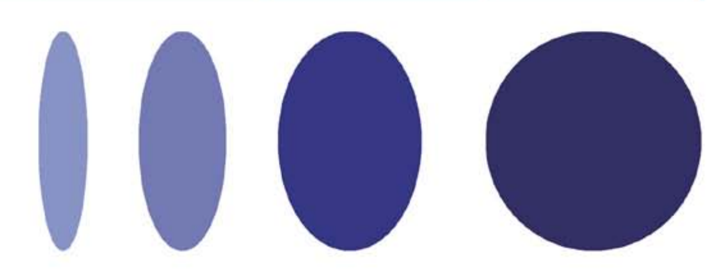


Successful Writing for Qualitative Researchers

Peter Woods



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Researchers often find the writing up process difficult, whether it is to complete a thesis or produce an article or book. Yet they are coming under increasing pressure to improve rates of production. In these circumstances, a text like this one becomes essential reading for all researchers.

This book explains how you get started, and how you can sustain the right frame of mind for writing. The writing process is considered, both in terms of a traditional academic approach and in the light of new forms and modes of expression that have arisen in recent years. Careful attention is paid to the editing stage; this is a major part of the work for many writers and crucial in producing the right sort of results. Working in a team equipped with new technology can go a long way to meeting many of the usual demands. Finally, consideration is given to how to prepare your work for publication.

This book should be of use to students, researchers and writers concerned with how to get their research written, and who are also interested in both the techniques and the experience of writing.

Peter Woods is Professor of Education at the Open University. He is the author of numerous books and articles on education and research methods, including *Inside Schools* and *Researching the Art of Teaching* (both for Routledge).

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In memory of my wife, Kathleen,
who made this book—and the others—possible

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Acknowledgements

I would like to record my thanks to all those who have contributed to my own writing abilities, such as they are, over the years. My earliest recollection is of writing 'compositions' at junior school, which I much enjoyed. We were given subjects that inspired us to write, and were encouraged to be creative and to share our efforts with others. Through this freedom and regular opportunity to express thoughts and feelings on matters close to my concerns and interests, I discovered the excitement and joy of writing, and the gratification that comes from the positive response of others. At secondary school, I learnt more about the mechanics and techniques of writing; different forms, such as free-writing articles, more formal essays, literary criticism, journalistic pieces. I was introduced to great writers and to the world of books. I remember little of 'clause analysis'—the bane of my life as a young teacher in the 1960s—but I have reason to be grateful for the prolonged and detailed attention given in English lessons to comprehension, paraphrasing, reported speech and summarising. I learnt much, too, from my study of French, and particularly Latin—a beautifully constructed language. My heartfelt thanks to the teachers of my childhood and youth. I did not fully appreciate your contribution at the time, but I have grown to be more and more aware of it as time has passed.

Since those days, the main influences on my writing have been other authors, colleagues and editors. I like to think that the largest part of my writing is 'me', and that I have my own distinctive style—as I encourage in the book—but writing is an act of communication. It has to be understood by and impact on others. At the very least you need feedback from others on to what extent you are doing this. For the best results, you need advice and examples from other practitioners and experts in the field. I have been lucky in my contacts in these respects over the years, particularly at the Open University. As a distance-teaching institution, the main medium for its products is the written text, and it dedicates major resources to producing work of the highest quality. The main resources are: the course team—all commenting on each other's work through a number of drafts; external assessors, checking for comparable standards with other universities; in-house editors, scrupulously studying every word and sentence; and proxy students who take part in the 'developmental testing' of draft material. At times, an author might feel quite beleaguered, but that is how

it should be. As the product becomes worthier, the pressure eases, appreciation ensues, and you see the point of it all. My thanks to the Open University, and all who work there. It is no coincidence, perhaps, that everything I have had published to date has been written while I have been employed at this institution.

A number of colleagues have helped with this particular book. Among these, I am particularly grateful to Bob Jeffrey, Geoff Troman, Denise Carlyle, Mari Boyle, Nick Hubbard and Barry Cocklin. I am grateful to Martyn Hammersley for providing the interview on which Example 4 in Chapter 2 is based. I have appreciated once again the expert secretarial assistance of Aileen Cousins. My Springer Spaniel dog, Bronwyn, my companion in long walks over the Northamptonshire countryside and at my desk as I sit here writing, has helped in more ways than she realises.

Chapter 1 is an updated version of Chapter 6, 'Writing up', from *Inside Schools* (Woods 1986). This book will soon be out of print, so I have thought it appropriate to re-use the chapter here. Chapter 6 draws on two journal articles: Woods, P., Jeffrey, R., Troman, G., Boyle, M. and Cocklin, B. (1998) Team and technology in writing up research', *British Educational Research Journal,* 24 (5); and Woods, P., Jeffrey, R., Troman, G. and Boyle, M. (in press) 'A research team in ethnography', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education.* I am grateful to my coauthors and to the publishers for permission to re-use some of this work here.

My thanks also to the following for permission to reproduce material in this book: Figure 3: Stubbs, M. and Delamont, S. (1976) *Explorations in Classroom Observation,* reproduced by permission of John Wiley & Sons Limited. Example 2 in Chapter 4: from *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt (1996), reproduced by permission of HarperCollins Publishers Ltd. Advice to Referees for BERJ, reproduced by permission of The British Educational Research Journal (BERJ), published by Carfax Publishing. Extract from *Restructuring Schools, Reconstructing Teachers* by P.Woods, B.Jeffrey, G.Troman and M.Boyle (1997); and *Guide to Referees of a Synopsis,* reproduced by permission of Open University Press.

Introduction

> The only end of writing is to enable the readers better to enjoy life or better to endure it.
>
> (Samuel Johnson, 1757)

> Good writing comes from complex sources: intense motivation and sensibility, passion and cultural curiosity, from energy and craft.
>
> (Malcolm Bradbury, 1998)

> True ease in writing comes from art, not chance, As those move easiest who have learned to dance.
>
> (Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism)*

The writing of this book was not at all straightforward, quite the opposite in fact, since chapters were written in reverse order, and I did get stuck on occasions (see for example Chapter 2). I wondered at times what authority I had to write a book on 'successful writing'. But then I persuaded myself that these were not uncommon experiences among writers. What mattered was not whether they suffered writer's block or tackled several chapters at once in reverse order, but whether and how they got going again, how they put the final product together, and whether they managed to finish it.

As well as 'getting it written', however, there is the question of quality. How can one write a successful book as well as succeed in writing it? This kind of success depends on one's aims. There are many forms of writing, and writers have a number of different purposes. I am mainly concerned in this book with academic writing such as appears in books, learned journals, theses and dissertations, conference papers, research reports, commissioned articles, and the professional media. A successful product, therefore, involves work being judged of sufficient quality to be accepted for such things as publication—and receiving reasonable reviews from one's peers, the award of a postgraduate degree, lodging in the British Library by a research agency, or a conference presentation.

There is much lively debate about quality at the moment, with educational research under particular scrutiny. There are those who argue that much of it is

'second rate' (D.Hargreaves 1996), partisan and poorly executed and presented (Tooley 1998). Educational researchers have mounted a robust response (for example Bassey 1996; Budge 1996; Gray *et al* 1997; Hodkinson 1998). However, to a certain extent the contributors to this debate talk past each other, since what quality constitutes is determined, to some extent, by the particular epistemology you work within and the concomitant discourse of presentation that you adopt. Sparkes (1995:185, quoted in Hodkinson 1998: 17), for example, argues,

> Given that different epistemological and ontological assumptions inform qualitative and post-positivistic (quantitative) inquiry, it makes little sense to impose the criteria used to pass judgement on one upon the other. Attempts to do so are at best, misguided and at worst arrogant and nonsensical, a form of intellectual imperialism that build failure in from the start so that the legitimacy of other research forms is systematically denied.

I need to make clear, therefore, the approach taken in this book. My concern is qualitative research methods, particularly those that derive from symbolic interactionism in their application to education. This approach has had the most general influence in social scientific research in recent years among qualitative methods; and many of its principles and techniques are shared with other forms of qualitative work. Writing is particularly important in qualitative research, because its warrant rests on description, narrative, argument and persuasion, unlike quantitative research with its reliance on statistical and technical instruments (Atkinson 1991). I give a brief summary of its main features (see Woods 1986, 1996, for more extended treatment).

Qualitative research

Main features of qualitative research

Most forms of qualitative research have the following main features:

- A focus on natural settings
- An interest in meanings, perspectives and understandings
- An emphasis on process
- Inductive analysis and grounded theory

A focus on natural settings

Qualitative research is concerned with life as it is lived, things as they happen, situations as they are constructed in the day-to-day, moment-to-moment course of

events. Qualitative researchers seek lived experiences in real situations. In general, they try not to disturb the scene and to be unobtrusive in their methods. This is in an attempt to ensure that data and analysis will closely reflect what is happening.

The researcher tries to make as few assumptions as possible in advance on what problems and issues will be found. It helps if the researcher 'makes the familiar strange', not taking things for granted, questioning the bases of action (Becker 1971); though, at other times, 'deep familiarity' with the scene and the people in it can aid insights (Goffman 1989; Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Qualitative researchers prefer fairly lengthy and deep involvement in the natural setting. Social life is complex in its range and variability. It also operates at different levels and has many layers of meaning (Berger 1966). A long stay is necessary to gain access to these.

There has been some dispute as to whether there are such 'real situations', let alone whether they can ever be represented in research accounts. However, few qualitative researchers these days would subscribe to the view that there is one objective reality that is totally knowable. More common is the modified view of 'critical', 'analytical' or 'subtle' realism (Hammersley 1992; Altheide and Johnson 1994). This holds to the view of knowledge as a representation of reality, but one that can only ever be known partially, not totally. The more we refine our methods, the more rigorously we apply them, and the more skilled we become in the art of writing, the closer we approximate to that reality. But as knowledge is never total or certain, it can only be provisional, and subject to alteration or refinement by later research. There is no fixed, immutable truth in social science, no design (that we can know at any rate) by which things all fit together. 'The social world is an interpreted world…[analytic realism] is based on the value of trying to represent faithfully and accurately the social worlds or phenomena studied' (Altheide and Johnson 1994:489).

An interest in meanings, perspectives and understandings

The qualitative researcher therefore seeks to discover the meanings that participants attach to their behaviour, how they interpret situations and what their perspectives are on particular issues. Just as situations can influence perspectives, so people can redefine and construct situations. Research methods have to be sensitive to the perspectives of all participants, and must sample across place and over time as perspectives may vary accordingly. Researchers have to be close to groups, live with them, look out at the world through their eyes, empathise with them, appreciate the inconsistencies, ambiguities and contradictions in their behaviour, explore the nature of their interests, understand their relationships.

The researcher tries to appreciate the culture of these groups, to capture the meanings that permeate the culture as understood by the participants, to learn their particular use of language, and to understand their in-group behaviour. The association of these cultures with social structures might then be traced.

An emphasis on process

Qualitative researchers are interested in how understandings are formed, how meanings are negotiated, how roles are developed, how a curriculum works out, how a policy is formulated and implemented, how a pupil becomes deviant. These are processual matters, not products. Social life is ongoing, developing, fluctuating, becoming. It never arrives or ends. Some forms of behaviour may be fairly stable, others variable, others emergent. Some forms of interaction proceed in stages or phases. This again emphasises for the researcher the need for long and sustained immersion in the field in order to cover whole processes and produce ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973) that will encompass this richness.

Inductive analysis and grounded theory

Qualitative researchers do not, on the whole, start with a theory which they aim to test and prove or disprove, though there is no reason why they should not do that if they wished. They mainly work the other way round, seeking to generate theory from data. The theory is then said to be grounded in the social activity it purports to explain (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

Validity

The validity of interactionist qualitative research commonly rests upon three main features:

- Unobtrusive, sustained methods. These are methods that leave the situation undisturbed as far as possible, hence the emphasis on participant or non-participant observation, unstructured interviews or conversations, the use of key informants and the study of documents.
- Respondent validation. If our aim is to understand the meanings and perspectives of others, how else to test how faithfully we have represented them than with the people concerned themselves? This is not appropriate, however, in all situations, for example where the researcher unavoidably gets caught up in the internal politics of the institution under study, or in some instances where criticisms are being advanced (see Scarth 1985).
- Triangulation. The use of different researchers or methods, at different moments of time, in different places, among different people and so on, strengthens the account. For example, information learned at interview is reinforced, and perhaps modified, by observation, and by study of documents —or by more interviews. Eisner (1991:110) uses the term ‘structural corroboration’—‘a means through which multiple types of data are related to each other to support or contradict the interpretation and evaluation of a state of affairs’.

There are a number of variations on these. Writing up within this framework, therefore, consists essentially of stating the results of the research and the evidence on which they are based, and demonstrating the adequacy of that evidence by the above criteria. This has been the standard model in qualitative research for many years.

The postmodernist challenge

Some claim a 'crisis of representation' occurred during the 1970s and 1980s when 'postmodernists, poststructuralists, and feminists challenged us to contemplate how social science may be closer to literature than to physics' (Bochner and Ellis 1996:18). Postmodernists argue that the traditional approach as outlined above sits within a realist frame wherein the researcher/author is paramount. The traditionalist author presents a kind of objective reality that they have perceived as some kind of omniscient onlooker. In the written account, it is the writer who is describing, analysing, interpreting, representing. Even where transcript is liberally used, selections are made and they are organised within the author's framework. With the 'literary' or 'postmodernist' turn (Tyler 1986) have come new forms of writing, more relativist than realist, that stem from the belief that the knowledge in the text is not independent of the author, and what we know can only be partial anyway. The emphasis here is not so much on 'getting it right' (in the sense of representing one objective reality) as getting it 'differently contoured and nuanced' (Richardson 1994b:521). There is not one truth, not one single explanation of anything, but many overlapping truths operating at different levels and constantly subject to change. Richardson (1994b: 522) consequently feels that 'crystallization' is a more useful validating concept than triangulation. The latter assumes a fixed point, a single truth; it is too rigid and two dimensional for the many-sided complexity of social life. The crystal, by contrast, 'combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach' *(ibid.)*. Some find formal writing in consequence—the traditional kind for research texts—not only misplaced, but boring and outdated (Bolton 1994; Richardson 1994b). They advocate experimenting with new modes that offer deeper understandings of the phenomena they describe.

Van Maanen (1988) has summarised the main genres that have emerged as

1 'realist tales'—the traditional approach with the emphasis on realism and objectivism, with the writer adopting a detached, omniscient stance, and employing 'scientific' criteria to validate the research;
2 'confessional tales', where writers actually see themselves as part of the research act and make 'confessions' about the problems and limitations of their research methods and their own actions as researchers. However, these tales largely remain within the paradigm of realist tales; and

3 'impressionist (postmodernist) tales', which are much more concerned about giving voice to others in the research, those who might be regarded as 'subjects' of the research in realist tales. Writers of impressionist tales use a range of literary devices to evoke situations and experiences, arouse feelings as well as stimulate thought, and to celebrate differences, numerous and changing realities, incompleteness and partiality. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:338) conclude that 'This results in a very different story, a very different way of reporting field research, but one which is striking, exciting, vibrant, richly descriptive and imaginative'.

Some argue that these different approaches are products of different epistemologies. They claim that there has been a paradigmatic shift, and that we have arrived at a new, clearly identifiable 'moment' in qualitative research (see for example Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Denzin 1997). As seen in sharply delineated realist or relativist terms, there is clearly a huge difference. My own view is that these approaches are not mutually exclusive; that the new approaches extend the possibilities for ethnographic representation largely within the traditional frame (Hammersley 1992; Altheide and Johnson 1994; see Woods 1996 for an extended discussion of this position).

There are different kinds and levels of social life with which the researcher deals. Some are more objective, such as items involving some kind of quantification or hard description; some are more subjective, like individuals' emotions, values, beliefs and opinions; and some are impressionistic, as in one's representation of the 'climate' of a situation, or of the 'mood' of a group of people. Certainly, some of these areas have not featured strongly in traditional qualitative research as yet, but there is no epistemological reason why they should not. Thus it is possible to tell an impressionistic tale within a realist context. It is in this respect that we need to seize the postmodernist moment to extend our research, and to develop and refine our methods.

At the same time, we have to recognise that experimentation is risky. It can yield high gains, but equally abysmal failures. For students, Hoadley-Maidment and Mercer (1996:291) feel that 'the plain truth remains that academic success usually depends on following the conventions for academic English in the relevant field of study'. Weiner (1998:21) concludes her review of academic journals by opining, 'In an era such as this—of "paradigm proliferation"—it would seem that articles which represent more traditional forms of research and discourse in the dominant paradigm are likely to remain predominant in academic journals'. One does get the feeling, however, that the scope for experimentation is gradually widening, and that we should go in search of those 'high gains'. Creativity should not be restricted to data collection and analysis, but applied also to modes of writing in the continuing quest to improve all aspects of research.

> If academic writing in general is not to become a sterile, formula-oriented activity, we have to encourage individual creativity in writing. It is the tension between received conventions and the innovative spirit of the individual that produces good writing in academic disciplines as well as in creative literature.
>
> (Kachru 1996:311)

Structure of the book

Many of the issues discussed in the book are common to most forms of writing. For example, as I discuss in Chapter 1, authors need to be in the right frame of mind for writing. In my early career, I tried sitting back and waiting for the muse to descend upon me, as I understood it did with famous poets and writers. This was not the best use of my time. I had to find other ways of cultivating mood, of pushing myself to get down to it and of keeping at it, especially when all seemed hopeless. This is more a matter of psychology than technique. I consider, therefore, the psychological disposition of the writer, and the pains and perils of writing. It helps to know that many writers in many different fields have wrestled with these problems.

Qualitative researchers traditionally do data collection, analysis and writing up simultaneously in a kind of spiralling process (see for example Lacey 1976), engaging in 'progressive focusing' as they go. These stages of research blend into each other so that it becomes impossible at times to see the join. Analysing an interview, for example, might yield a potential structure for writing up while simultaneously indicating where more data is needed. Analysis is the first major step in the work of writing, for it will provide us with our framework. After that the task is not so daunting, for we can tackle the account piece by piece in more manageable portions. In Chapter 2, therefore, I present the most common mode of organising accounts in qualitative research, that is by category and/or by theme, after considering the structure of a typical journal article.

This is a solid and secure approach. However, it is not suitable for all purposes. Indeed you can organise and write your account in any way that you like. The 'literary turn' is opening up fascinating new opportunities here. I refer to some of these in Chapter 3. These styles appear to make a sharp contrast with the previous chapter. Whereas Chapter 2 might imply a one-method approach to organisation, and a standard academic discourse, Chapter 3 carries a message of any approach being suitable that serves the purposes of the writer and meets certain criteria of adequacy. I consider some alternative forms of writing, most of which, in my opinion, can be accommodated within the methodological framework of this book. I then go on in Chapter 4 to look at expressive modes of writing, which can characterise modernist and postmodernist frames alike. In both, authors are concerned at times to evoke atmospheres and moods, represent feelings, paint word pictures, establish empathetic communication with the reader. I consider the criteria of adequacy that apply to this kind of writing.

However you proceed, the work is going to require firm editing. Indeed some writers, myself included, spend far more time editing than creating text from scratch (see for example Wolcott 1990). Jean Hegland (Moggach 1998) says that 99 per cent of her writing is re-writing. I find that Ph.D. students might take six months to a year applying the finishing touches to their final draft, reordering, re-phrasing, re-writing, correcting, deleting, adding, modifying, and so on. Much of this is a matter of mastering the basic rules of English. Editing, however, can itself be a creative process. It is not simply a technical exercise of correcting grammar, punctuation and spelling, though that is involved. I rehearse some of the considerations in Chapter 5.

One omission in this book is any detailed consideration of resources for writing. This includes software packages to aid analysis (see Coffey *et al.* 1996), but I am thinking primarily of the implements that we use, such as pens, pencils, typewriters and computers. I omit it here only because I have written about it recently elsewhere (in Woods 1996: Chapter 6). I do, however, consider the use of the new technology in another way. In Chapter 6 I illustrate how electronic mail (e-mail) aided the collaborative work between members of a research team who were composing a multi-authored document. We felt that team and technology were a potent force here in getting the job done speedily and to a standard above that any of the individual members could have reached in the time available. The team opened up new research horizons, facilitated the 'muddling-through' process typical of qualitative research, provided extended bases of comparison, helped in the refinement of arguments, enhanced validity, enriched the text, provided a support base for members and helped to sustain impetus. The conjunction of team and technology is not a recipe for all occasions and can have its dangers, but we found it helpful in tackling some of the problems raised in earlier chapters here.

The final mark of success for many is whether their work gets published. Chapter 7 looks at some of the issues involved here. This is not just a matter of quality of product, though that obviously is important. It also involves adopting the right strategies, of directing your writing toward the right audience and the right publishing outlet, of approaching and negotiating with the latter in appropriate ways. Again, also, there is the question of psychology, of having the right kind of mental set; not, for example, becoming too easily dispirited. Indeed, one should not be writing at all if that is a tendency!

There are now a number of texts on writing in the social sciences, notably Becker (1986), Van Maanen (1988), Wolcott (1990), Richardson (1990) and Ely *et al.* (1997)—all American. The nearest British texts are Atkinson (1990) and Hammersley (1991) though they are primarily about reading ethnography. Chapters on writing in general methods texts are becoming more common (for example Strauss 1987; Bogdan and Biklen 1992; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Gilbert 1993). A useful overview of the field has been given by Hammersley (1994). There are a number of general 'study skills' texts that consider basic techniques of writing, such as Fairbairn and Winch (1996). There

is also (at the time of writing under construction) an EARLI (The European Association of Research into Learning and Instruction) Academic Writing Online Course, which will 'seek to reproduce, in an abbreviated and simulated form, the living social process through which articles are produced, reviewed, amended and eventually published in an academic journal' (http://www-iet.open.ac.uk/courses/awo/awo.html).

This book combines elements of most of these—consideration of techniques of writing within an educational and social scientific framework, with some attention to aspects of the personal struggles involved. Ethnographic books on writing have something in common, but each one of them is also unique because they derive from their authors' unique experiences. They are products of the reflexivity that is an essential part of the ethnographic process. This reflexivity continues with the readers, for they will be making their own constructions based on their own particular stock of resources—books they have read, experiences they have had, studies they have made, personal predispositions. These will feed into their own unique styles of writing.

Chapter 1
Getting started and keeping going

> I think all writers of prose live in a state of induced insanity.
> (J.G.Ballard, in Moggach 1998)

> I think I'm either frighteningly sane or incorrigibly mad.
> (Iain Banks, *Ibid.*)

> I can't think of any great writers who are sane.
> (Phyllis Nagy, *Ibid.*)

If we are to be successful writers, it seems we must be prepared to become a little insane. We must be somewhat mad to take on the activity in the first place, but we also have to destabilise our minds in order to shake up the commonplace, play with ideas, look for new insights. It is easy to see how this can become a way of life for professional writers. What we researchers might aim for, I would suggest, is a kind of controlled madness. In this way, we might gain the benefits without suffering the consequences. So what is involved? And how can we become mad without becoming certifiable?

The 'pain' threshold

In the 'creative' activity of data analysis there is a critical point that falls as much within the communication of these ideas as in their generation. Ideas can be fleeting, hazy, ill formed, fanciful, irrelevant, inconsequential. Often, it is only when we apply the iron discipline of writing to them that we come to realise this. Sometimes, writing can pin them down. Bolton (1994:63) finds writing 'a way of grasping experiences that are otherwise lost in the depths of the mind. Things that are almost impossible to say can often be expressed in writing'. Sometimes it is a task approached with some trepidation, as with the budding author in Piers Paul Read's *Polonaise* (1977:131): 'The difficulty he faced with the white sheet of paper was not that he had no ideas, but that he no longer trusted his ideas to keep their shape as he gave them expression'.

Thus we might find what we thought a particularly useful concept rather difficult to grasp; or a seemingly beautiful, but light and airy idea only wafted further away as we try to seize it; or an apparently imposing edifice, encapsulating our research and all others in a totally new and discipline-shattering way, knocked over, like a castle of matchsticks, by a touch of the keyboard or stroke of the pen. As the parody of the poet's lines has it:

> Pope springs eternal in the human breast
> What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.

With others we find, as we put on them the best constructions we can, a certain emptiness, banality, impossibility, inappropriateness, unoriginality. We may be forced back to a reconsideration of our data, perhaps to more data collection and re-categorising, certainly to re-conceptualising.

Failure, or a 'refusal' at this Beecher's Brook of data analysis, can be a disheartening experience. Perhaps this is why so many promising Ph.D. studies founder, why some research studies never get reported, and why some spend so long in data collection. It is not, however, an insurmountable problem, and the potential gains are considerable. Charles Morgan has said of the artist

> no one can be effectively an artist without taking pains.… This technical part of an artist's life may be learned, and the learning may be carried so far that it ceases to be narrowly technical and becomes a study of the grand strategy of artistic practice.
>
> (1960:119)

Thus there is a certain amount of craftwork in the creative enterprise. Additionally, it may be helpful to conceive of the problem not so much in terms of what you do to the data, but what you do to yourself.

Pain is an indispensable accompaniment of the process. How often do we hear somebody admitting they 'sweated blood' in writing a certain piece; or that 'getting the words out is like pulling teeth' (Andrew Miller, in Moggach 1998); or stating that they know a certain stage in the research is near, and must be faced, but that they are 'dreading' and 'hating it'? Moreover it does not get any easier. For Barry Hines *(Ibid.),* for example, though his 'prose is very simple' and must seem 'easy to write', 'writing is actually getting harder the older I get'. Bernice Rubens also thinks that writers do not improve with age *(Ibid.).* This aspect of the research is best conceived as a rite of passage, a ritual that is as much a test of self as anything else, that has to be gone through if the research project is to reach full maturity. If we do not feel pain at this point, there is almost certainly something wrong. Perhaps we are not progressing and simply marking time, being satisfied with analysis at an elementary level that plays safe and avoids the risk of burning in the ring of fire, as well as the burden of hard work. While such reports may not be entirely without value, they may not

be making the best use of their material. Researchers must be masochists. We must confront the pain barrier till it hurts. Dea Birkett likens writing to sex —'agony, agony, agony and then release as the words finally come' (Moggach 1998). Judy Blume finds writing 'hard. The first draft of a book is terrible. With my last, it took me a few years just to find the right tone' *(Ibid.).* Jennifer Nias (1991:160) writes

> Producing a manuscript which I feel is fit for publication is hard and tiresome work, inducing broken nights, bad temper and the kind of preoccupation which is often difficult to distinguish from utter egocentricity. I can truthfully say that whereas data collection is generally enjoyable and analysis is intellectually rewarding, writing is painful drudgery.

We share this experience with all kinds of creative people. I recall hearing Philip Gardiner (a Norfolk artist) describing his experience of painting as 'tense and draining—but it has to be, I wouldn't have it any other way. It's very precarious, but it adds a certain lustre to life'. The biographical annals of composers, writers, poets and artists are strewn with similar accounts of self-imposed suffering.

Moral imperatives and mental conditioners

How then might we break out of this psychological state and render our chief research instrument—ourselves—more effective at this critical juncture? There is, first, a baseline of physical, mental and situational fitness without which it would be difficult to do this sort of work. I cannot write if I am tired, worried or ill, or if I am distracted. Nor does the creative urge in research and art necessarily go well with teaching. Research may benefit teaching, but the converse does not apply. As Hugh MacDiarmid has noted of art (in the general sense, and in the same sense that Nisbet [1962] saw it as applying to sociology):

> To halt or turn back in order to try to help others is to abandon artistic progress, and exchange education for art. There is no altruism in art. It is every man for himself. In so far as he advances, the progress of others may be facilitated, but in so far as he is conscious of according any such facilitation, his concentration on purely artistic objectives is diminished.
>
> (MacDiarmid 1969:45)

If peace is essential, so too is pressure. I have heard some writers (novelists) say that their best work is done in situations where time hangs heavy on their hands, but for myself I have not found that always so. Perhaps their pressure derives from a self-generating muse, whereas I am very much a product of the Protestant Ethic. I need external motivators. In fact the danger is that, given time, I sink into even greater torpor. Certainly one must have time for analysis and writing, and

research sponsors rightly stress the need to make due allowance for it. But nothing concentrates the mind more wonderfully than schedules. We might bemoan them, but where a research report is due, a publisher's deadline to be met or a paper to be prepared for a certain seminar or conference date, then there is necessity whipping the flaccid mind into activity. For this reason it pays to contrive to have inserted in the research programme at strategic points dates for the production of papers on some aspect of the research. They must of course involve some investment of status, and this might mean addressing a public. Thus status will be lost if the schedule is not met. At the same time, it needs to be recognised that there is a fine dividing line between a nicely crowded agenda and overwork, the latter possibly having grave consequences for the quality of product and personal well-being.

Schedules can be awesome and counter-productive if they ask for too much in too short a time. The most serviceable, possibly, are those that are staggered, that do not require a finished article at a stroke, but permit degrees of sophistication. The leap from data to presentation then need not seem too vast, and the perfectionist instincts that many researchers have can be requited and exploited in a legitimate way instead of adding to the difficulties of the task. For there is a need to take risks in the early stages of analysis, to 'play' with the data, to 'try out' certain configurations and explanations. It helps to bounce these ideas off other people. Not only might colleagues provide some useful input, but the mere fact of having to articulate your ideas might bring you to see them in a new way.

Having internalised the moral imperative to write, I feel the need for some mental stimulants and conditioners. These are of two kinds, techniques and aspirations. Techniques are to do with the mechanics of communication. Here I might recall certain aspects of my training—'Where to begin, how to end, how to orchestrate, how to be simple and direct…these things are the armoury of writers' (Morgan 1960:132). And Morgan recalls his indebtedness to his own former studies, for example Greek and Latin

> For case, mood, tense, voice and a thousand refinements different from his own…and while he fights his own battle for an elusive meaning, he may be fortified against the accursed blight of 'It couldn't matter less' by the sound and memory of battles long ago.
>
> *(ibid.)*

The stimulation of mental agility no doubt varies greatly from person to person. Quite a bit of help comes from reading what other people have written. David Lodge, for example, learnt

> From [Graham] Greene, how to use a few selected details, heightened by metaphor and simile, to evoke character or the sense of place; from [Evelyn] Waugh, how to generate comedy by a combination of logic and surprise, of the familiar and the incongruous; from [James] Joyce, how

> to make a modern story re-enact, echo or parody a mythical or literary precursor-narrative. I learned many other things from these writers as well —above all, I would like to think, a craftsmanlike approach to the business of writing, a willingness to take pains, a commitment to making the work as good as you can possibly make it.
>
> (Lodge 1996:172)

I prefer at these times to read material other than sociology or education. To be sure, one cannot research in a vacuum, and a thorough knowledge of the relevant literature is essential. However, academic research has a curious tendency to be all-consuming. There is so much of relevance to read that we feel we should know about. Thus if there is any time at all to spare we probably invest it in that further academic article or book that sits on the top of the large pile in our reading in-tray. But while a certain amount of such reading is essential for research context, it may not serve us very well for models of presentation. For some, of course, it might inspire. Others might find forcing themselves to embrace a wider field of literature and art productive in terms of mental stimulation and models for writing.

For power and economy of words, for mental leaps, comparisons and metaphors, I would recommend poetry (see also Harris 1976; Brown 1977). Whereas for strength of description, powers of observation, and the ability to bring off a point, give shape to an episode and form to a story; for sustained development and integration, for social commentary, human insight and sheer inventiveness, I would go to a novel or to drama.

A critic made this comment about Virginia Woolf's To *the Lighthouse:*

> It is a book that has deeply influenced me. I might be walking down the street involved in a series of thoughts which probably don't seem to have any connection—the brilliance of Virginia Woolf is that she discovered there were connections and, more important, she could make sense of them and write them down.

This is essentially the same kind of creativity involved in research.

Music and art are also helpful in this respect: they can calm the frenzied mind and reduce pain. Edward Blishen played a recording of Schubert's Octet obsessively whilst engaged in his *Adaptations.* Schubert 'can't have imagined that, 130 years after it was written, this enchanting music for the chamber would be used as a lenitive by a literary oddjobman' (1980:38).

What all these forms of art have in common is:

- In their timeless, eternal beauty, a kind of absolute validity.
- A perfection of form—their various parts all hang together and follow one another almost inevitably.

- A sense of growth—as point follows point, it is not simply a matter of addition, but greater depth to the message.
- Human creativity—they are among humankind's highest achievements.

All this is neatly illustrated in the play *Amadeus* by Peter Shaffer. Salieri, in wonderment at some new Mozart compositions, exclaims 'Displace one note, and there will be diminishment; displace one phrase, and the structure will fall'. As he looked at the manuscripts he realised that he 'was staring through those ink-notes at an absolute beauty'. Mozart himself realised his worth. 'Too many notes!' complained the emperor. Replied the composer, with absolute certainty: 'There are just as many notes, your majesty, no more, nor less than are required'. In all these respects, works of art serve as worthy models, in their mental processes, for our ethnographic work. All forms of art have the same properties. William Trevor, for example, himself a former sculptor, likens his storytelling to moulding and chipping away at a sculpture. It is what the writer David Lodge is alluding to when he says 'Every word must make an identifiable contribution to the whole'. Structuralists argue that there are basic common properties to these different artistic areas (see also Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Though 'transfer of training' theory was not popular some years ago in the debate over the usefulness of Latin as a school subject, Lévi-Strauss, for example, believes that the receipt by the brain of musical messages can serve as a model for the receipt of all other kinds of cultural message. For example, he argues that melody and harmony illustrate the structural linguist's distinction between sequence and content. Interestingly, Lévi-Strauss himself is often described as an artist as well as a scholar, and 'his style remains a baroque combination of order and fantasy' (Sperber 1979:24).

There is a further point—that whatever we select to consider in the area of art will reflect our own personal concerns and makeup, and encourage reflexivity. Thus it not only helps put our research on a broader plane of people's affairs, but also helps give it depth. Ethnographic work is extremely personal. To a greater extent than other forms of research, it allows a working out of one's own destiny within the context of 'public issues'. In other words, it offers insight into problems and anomalies one might have experienced in the past in a structured way aligned to general human experience, and thus avoids the excesses of self-indulgence.

Cranking up

And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,
And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot,
And thereby hangs a tale.

(William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*)

The models cited above are the Rolls-Royces of the artistic world. When I address myself to writing up research, I am reminded of my first car, an ancient Morris 1000, which had to be cranked up before it would start. It was rather erratic in its running; its tappets had a tendency to seize up and it occasionally boiled over, but it usually got there in the end, though not very quickly.

The 'cranking up' is a necessary preliminary. Analysis is multi-layered—it does not all take place on the same mental plane. Writing is such a different activity from other responsibilities of teaching and academic life that we are not usually in the right frame of mind. Nor do we fall into it naturally; it has to be artificially induced. We might regard it as another one of those 'challenges' and as potentially very rewarding intellectually. We might persuade ourselves that we actually enjoy writing, though any intellectual reward or enjoyment usually comes long afterwards, certainly not at the beginning. 'Writing up' research is nothing like the delightful essays we used to do at junior school, or the cathartic bits of biography, diary or magazine articles we may compose from time to time, which have a stronger measure of journalese about them. Academic writing is a strongly disciplined activity, and we have to gear ourselves up for it.

I might have to set aside anything from a day to a week for 'cranking up'. I might find that I have two or three clear days that I can give over to making a start on writing, to generate a bit of impetus that may then be carried on over the next two to three weeks. This is an average time for getting to grips with a writing project, and in general I find I have to devote all my attention to it during that period if I am to master it. I am very unsociable and rather ill tempered during this time. Some of us may actually have to appear to undergo profound personality changes in order to do the work. Unlike Dr Jekyll, however, we have no magic potion.

I find it is done almost by default. That is, I always delude myself into thinking that I am actually going to commence writing on those first days. I rarely do, for what happens is confrontation and engagement with the pain barrier. Part of this is to do with forcing oneself into psychological overdrive. What these initial two to three days consist of, then, might be a reconsideration of all the research material, a continuous sifting and re-sifting, clearing out the debris identifying the strengths, aligning the material towards them, checking on key associated work, re-classifying, having one or two attempts at an introduction, and, if that fails, putting together one of the more complete, coherent and interesting sections. If the latter works, it can snowball and provide a comparatively easy passage. More typically, it is only the beginning of the struggle.

What one is doing, then, in these early stages is, first, undergoing a process of 'psyching up' to writing pitch (a process attended by some disorder and discomfort); second, going through the initial stages of preparing one's material for presentation. The cranking-up process is partly systematic and consolidating, partly disorderly and adventurous, as one searches for new configurations. This latter indicates a third activity therefore, one of trying to develop new insights.

It comes from reading and re-reading field notes, transcripts, summaries, categories; examining comments made along the way, perhaps in a research diary made at the time 'for future reference'. One tests out a few more ideas, seeing what they look like on paper. Diagrams are useful in trying to show interrelationships. The wastepaper basket fills up rapidly. Robert Graves was told by an early mentor that his 'best friend was the wastepaper basket', and this, he later discovered, was 'good advice'.

At the end of the first day, therefore, all that may have been produced is a side of A4, which will probably be at once discarded the following day, but a great deal of mental preparation and ground clearing of data will have been done. I have a standard 'production rate' of five written pages, or a thousand words a day. This seems to be about right for me when I am working properly. But writers vary considerably. Joseph Connolly used to write 5,000 words a day, now 'half that' (Moggach 1998). Penny Vincenzi writes '4,000 words on a good day, 1,500–2,000 on a bad one' *(Ibid.)*. R.M.Eversz writes 'a great deal each day because I often disregard everything I've written' *(Ibid.)*. Charles Frazier is happy with 'a page a day' *(Ibid.)*. Flaubert is reported to have said, 'A good sentence can be a good day's work'. The quality of my first efforts may be variable, but I do not worry about that at this stage, as long as the brain is being oiled into gear and some ideas are beginning to come. The 'quota' stands as some tangible and identifiable product of the work of the day. While this is a stage for throwing ideas around in the mind and testing out alternative constructions, the acid test for them is whether they retain their potential value in communication. The quota is a reasonable amount to provide for such a test—long enough to require sustained and coherent thought and to reflect fairly large-scale organisation, and short enough to tackle in a day without exhausting front-line concentration.

Protestant Ethic (P.E.) person also internalises time regulation. The ritual of sitting down to work at 9 a.m. and working through to 12 or 12.30 p.m., and then a further two hours in the afternoon, is a good mental discipline. Without this moral impulsion behind the ritual I doubt whether I would ever get found to writing at all. However, it is a curious thing that, while I keep to the ritual, 'off duty' hours can be vastly more productive. Thus winter evenings, weekends, late at night and occasionally early in the morning are all comparatively high productivity times. P.E. standards dictate that these are 'free time', and the psychology of it is that I cannot make a mess of them, or it does not matter if I do. I am consequently more relaxed, and often more productive. There is a feeling that this is all surplus and that you are 'getting ahead'. Periods before holidays are also useful. Holidays must be earned, and, if a project is unfinished, will not be enjoyed. There is, too, a strong practical impulsion, for a partially finished project means that 'cranking up' has to commence again on the same piece, after the 'limbering down' of the holiday—hardly the best use of scarce resources.

Having got cranked up, successfully engaged a gear and begun moving, I will at various points meet a roadblock. I take comfort, however, from the fact that

this happens to the best of authors. In one of his novels, Tchekhov agonised for days over how he was going to get one of his heroines across the threshold of a house. Hemingway rewrote the ending of A Farewell to Arms thirty-nine times before he was satisfied. Conrad had terrible torments. He sometimes wished to be a stone breaker, because 'There's no doubt about breaking a stone. But there's doubt, fear—a black horror, in every page one writes' (Karl and Davies 1983). Edward Blishen speaks of a highly capable novelist of his acquaintance who, after writing 'a hundred splendid pages would be overtaken by literary dread at its worst'—fear of reviewers, and fear that 'the narrative had come to a halt' (1980:118–19). He would beg Blishen 'to tell him frankly if I thought his skills were in decline…. And at the end, always, as I made the noises necessary to keep him writing, he'd ask, "Does it move? It does move, doesn't it?"'. The moral here is that we need friends, mentors, trusted colleagues whom we can rely on for good advice and support. This kind of therapy does not rule out the equally valuable constructive criticism one looks for from colleagues, which at times might be quite trenchant—though that is addressed to a different problem.

Writers develop their own psychological boosters. John Mortimer (1983:9) has his study plastered with his own playbills. 'I've never been strong on confidence. When the page is blank and you fear, as I regularly do, that it may never be filled again it does help to look up and think at least I wrote *that!*'. Bernice Rubens has 'a row of my books opposite the desk and I look at them and think that even if I can't write, I can still publish' (Moggach 1998). For those of us who have not got that far, we must have recourse to basic elements of character—confidence in one's ability to pass the threshold; patience, in not expecting too rapid a return and in tolerating difficulties and hold-ups; stamina and determination to keep at the task, exploring all avenues and employing all one's resources in countless configurations to find a way ahead.

There are strategies one can bring to bear on blockages. The first one perhaps is not to recognise blockages. Samuel Johnson observed 'A man may write at any time, if he will set himself doggedly to it'. Bernice Rubens finds that 'the only thing that shakes up my head is to sit down and stay sitting—that's the important thing. I don't believe in writer's block—it's just a convenient phrase' (Ibid.). Philip Larkin, similarly, rejected the notion of 'writer's block'. If he only produced four poems in a year, 'that's all there is' (Motion 1993). However, call it what you like, most of us do get stuck from time to time. We need to analyse the problem. Is it because of tiredness (even though perhaps you have not reached your quota)? The answer, clearly, is rest, or a change of activity. Do you have the right materials? Muriel Spark will only use Edinburgh's finest lined exercise books sent out to her in Italy by James Thin of Chambers Street, and pencils she will not use if someone else happens to touch them (*The Times,* 13 June 1998:22). Is it the situation you are in? Ronan Bennett (in Moggach 1998) needs 'total silence' while he is working. R.M. Eversz is also very anti-social when writing. 'My fiction is like a giant bubble I'm blowing, and I'm inside it and I want to stay in the little world I've created' *(Ibid.).* Dea Birkett *(Ibid.)* needs

solitude, and writes in a caravan in a field in Kent. Charles Frazier retires to a 'cabin in the mountains' *(Ibid.)*. Have you allowed enough time? Nias (1991:162) argues the need for time to think, and for taking time out for other things, since 'not all cerebral activity takes place at a conscious level and ideas can form while left to "compost" slowly'. Is it because of a lack of preparation or inadequate groundwork, so that you really do not know what you want to say? This would require a reconsideration of data, more reading perhaps, and certainly more preliminary thought. Or perhaps you have an uneasy feeling that the account is going up a blind alley, or that what seemed like the right direction in planning now in writing turns out to be a mirage. There is no alternative but to return to the beginning of the faulty line. The important thing is not to get consumed by the blockage, but to master it.

Otherwise, there are numerous little ploys that I am sure we all use to avoid such blockages. Gazing out of the window at the panoramic vista ('I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help'), drinking numerous cups of coffee (as much for the breaks as for the caffeine), pacing the room, listening to a cheerful thrush, examining distant activity on the allotments through binoculars (Damn! The coalman is getting ahead of me again!), conversing with the dog, explaining a point or making a speech to an imaginary audience (C.Wright Mills [1959] recommended this), holding a conversation in one's head, taking a walk around the garden, playing the violin…and so on. Nicholas Royle gets most of his ideas 'Walking to the tube or sitting on a bus' (Moggach 1998). Terry Pratchett *(Ibid.)* plays a computer game. Ronan Bennett *(Ibid.)* goes on a long run ('Because running is so hard and painful, my mind will focus on the story rather than think about it'). Christopher Fowler *(Ibid.)* listens to music, especially Mozart ('Apparently research in America showed that Mozart helped you to concentrate'). Thomas Keneally *(Ibid.)* has a snooker table in his study for such moments. Some recommend a bout of strenuous exercise, almost as if thrashing the ennui out of one's system—squash, swimming, gardening. One headmaster I knew used to keep a punchbag in his office for 'insoluble problem' times. Joseph Connolly *(Ibid.)* 'goes out' because he feels 'You've got to have contact with the outside world or you can end up as a drivelling loony in the attic strumming your lips'.

However, one needs to distinguish genuine blockages from self-induced ones. Work-avoidance strategies are particularly subtle in writing activities. In a study of student methods, Bernstein (1978:30) describes the 'creativity fritter'.

> It is best to wait until you are bursting with ideas or are sufficiently motivated, even if the motivation is guilt due to unsuccessful previous application of fritter techniques. This is therefore the let-it-brew-for-a-while fritter (closely related to this is the I'll-lie-down-and-think-about-it fritter; the possible danger in this tactic is, of course, very clear; listing all things people are designed to do horizontally, studying is one of the lowest on the list).

We might take heart again from the fact that even the best writers 'fritter'; indeed they excel at it. Coleridge wrote to a friend, 'To-morrow morning, I doubt not, I shall be of clear and collected spirits; but tonight I feel that I should do nothing to any purpose, but and excepting Thinking, Planning and Resolving to resolve—and praying to be able to execute' (letter to John H. Morgan, 1814). William Cowper similarly:

> Difficult (I say) for me to find opportunities for writing. My morning is engrossed by the garden; and in the afternoon, till I have drunk tea, I am fit for nothing. At five o'clock we walk; and when the walk is over, lassitude recommends rest, and again I become fit for nothing. The current hour therefore which (I need not tell you) is comprised in the interval between four and five, is devoted to your service, as the only one in the twenty-four which is not otherwise engaged.
>
> (letter to the Rev. William Unwin, 1781)

Christopher Isherwood, an extremely prolific writer, nonetheless records

> A morning of pathological sloth. What brings on this disgraceful, paralytic laziness? It is always dangerous, of course, not to dress before breakfast. I spent nearly two and a half hours reading 'Life' magazine. Then I got shaved, collapsed again into a chair. Then I washed. Another relapse. Then, at last, I dressed. It was now two o'clock. The beautiful, intact morning, which might have been used for all kinds of valuable purposes, was wasted—as vulgarly, as meaninglessly as a millionaire wastes ten dollars on a flower which he will immediately throw away.
>
> (Bucknell 1996:63)

Emily Perkins makes

> a really slow start—I'll do anything to put off starting work. I have tea, toast, read the papers—I have to do the crossword every morning—and deal with my post. I usually get to my word processor about 10 a.m. Then I sit there, slopping tea over the keyboard and looking out of the window, thinking about my book.
>
> (The Times, 30 May 1998:21)

Bernice Rubens will 'even rather do the ironing than start (writing). When there's finally nothing left to do, I'll go upstairs' (Moggach 1998).

Work-avoidance strategies may indicate a genuine need for relief, or an only-too-human reaction to steer clear of pain. We might at least recognise them for what they are. As for blockages, one might try to head them off by ensuring a stream of options. Pen and paper should be carried at all times. Ideas may be sparked off by autosuggestion when watching television, listening to the radio,

cooking a meal, digging the garden, walking the dog, and should be noted down before forgotten. I find driving in the car a particularly productive situation, and here a recording machine is helpful. When writing, I often find the mind playing with future possibilities at the same time as concentrating on the point in hand. Even as I write, I scribble down a key word at the bottom of the paper to remind me of them, lest they be lost.

If a blockage is unavoidable and immovable, I go elsewhere to some other part of the analysis where the going is easier. This helps recovery of fluency and confidence and helps salve the P.E. conscience as it fills out more of the quota. Or I may go back over what I have done, filling out a point here and there and further rationalising my plan. I shall then return to the blockage later, with newfound impetus. The whole report, paper, article or book is then put together later like a film at cutting and editing stage. I rarely write an article or book sequentially. The introduction is usually written last, for only then will I be sure of what the account is about. In the days when I used to write drafts by hand rather than on computer, my final handwritten manuscript would be a mass of deletions and inserts, some written overleaf, some on extra pages, which themselves would have inserts, deletions and, perhaps, extra pages. A secretary once described my manuscripts as like a game of Monopoly—'Go to…', 'Do not…', 'Go back to…', 'See over…', 'Insert from page…', with lines, arrows, bubbles, and so forth.

If all else fails, the blockage may lead to discarding that particular element, or at least pigeonholing it for future reference. However, it is as well to bear in mind that these are likely to be the most gratifying, worthwhile and celebrated aspects of the work if the problems are overcome. They should not be set aside lightly. It all adds to the excitement of doing research. It must also be noted that sometimes good can come from apparent misfortune. Nias (1991:162–3) observes that 'chaos' is a good 'seedbed for creativity', and has 'repeatedly found that an acutely uncomfortable period of ambiguity and confusion seems to be a necessary condition for the birth of a new idea'. She discovered, 'in seeking not to drown in the data…unexpected reefs under my feet'. Fine and Deegan (1996: 435) discuss the value in research of serendipity—making fortunate discoveries by accident. The chance occurrence can of course help or impede. What makes the difference, according to them,

> Lies in being prepared to turn what seems like the ashen remains of a project into a creative opportunity for scientific discovery. In this way, courting serendipity involves planned insight married to unplanned events.

I include the chance occurrence within the broader notion of 'critical moments' (Woods 1998:42). These may occur by chance, but also arise from a particular decision, or somebody else's key input, or a combination of factors that go uncommonly well:

> They have three distinguishing characteristics: 1. They lead to exceptional insight; 2. This result is unanticipated; and 3. They are radical in that they lead to new directions for the research. All such instances, as with 'chance', require a quality of 'recognition' in the researcher—the ability to see and grasp the opportunity…. The moral is to try to cultivate conditions in which creative thoughts might happen; and, in circumstances where exactly the opposite is prefigured, to develop and maintain a state of mind which will enable us to turn apparent adversity to good account.
>
> (ibid.:54)

The opposite of a blockage is a 'run', which typically follows a stoppage. Things suddenly begin to move. You see the solution to a problem, and, as in crosswords, this leads to solutions of other problems. You see connections and patterns that you did not see before. Your writing begins to flow. You get excited as more brilliant ideas begin to emerge. You have a great compulsion to get them down on paper while they last. You resent having to stop for other things—teaching, meetings, family engagements, sleeping, weekends, holidays. It depends, of course, on one's priorities, but there are things to be said for deferring or postponing what you can of other events while the inspiration lasts. Interrupted 'runs' have a habit of coming to an end with the interruption. Writing, a supremely sociable activity in aim, is an extremely unsociable activity in execution.

In between blockages and runs are other variations in mood and disposition. I might feel too tired or heavy-headed to do any original or creative writing, but fit enough to do some editing or fine tuning of existing material. Reading what others have written makes for a pleasant change; while looking up and making up references is the sort of purely technical exercise which is often all that I can do at the end of a busy day. It helps to play the variations depending on mood and state of mind, rather than wasting time, mental ability and nervous energy on an ill matched activity.

Planning

I recall in my school days the requirement to 'plan' an essay in rough. It was a one-off activity. You did your plan—you 'thought'—and then you followed it and 'wrote'. Planning in writing up research is immensely more complicated. The former is secondary work, and not particularly creative. The latter is a search for new formulations, and almost by definition cannot be planned in advance, for the creative process continues into writing up. In fact it may be *the* most creative part of qualitative work, and at times it is difficult to distinguish between planning and writing.

However, like patios and paint, as I have found over the years, you cannot apply the finish successfully without a good foundation. One's whole research, of course, involves planning, but in qualitative work, data collection ranges in a

free and relatively uncommitted way. Plans for the final product usually begin to take shape during initial analysis. This phase will involve the writing of memos, fieldnote annotations, diary entries, short accounts, summaries of data, and presentations to colleagues or at seminars (see Delamont 1992:50–63 for an illustrated account of this kind of build-up). Beyond this phase I find four main planning stages. Actual schemes of organisation around which this planning might focus I shall consider in Chapter 2. The four stages are:

1 A preliminary, partly systematic, partly randomised, speculative scheme
2 A provisional working plan
3 A re-worked plan at first draft stage, which may be repeated in subsequent drafts
4 A final tidying-up plan

Their nature is as follows.

Speculative scheme

The initial scheme attempts to combine the solidity of the work already done with more speculative attempts to theorise and conceptualise. One must be heavily selective, reducing the data to a manageable size for the presentation vehicle in mind. Ideally, the plan should present an all-inclusive, see-at-a-glance picture of all the most important features of the research. This facilitates seeing what relates to what and how various elements might hang together. Weak, unsupported elements are discarded. Data are marshalled to support others, and examples chosen. At the same time this fairly mechanical work is accompanied by 'brainwaves'—attempts to see the data in a new light. I will make plenty of notes at this stage, scribbling down these brainwaves as and when they come to me. I shall end up with a file of these, which I duly go through on an appointed 'planning' day. They will be annotated and classified, added to as further thoughts occur, and reduced as I find similar points repeated. The preliminary plan may be fairly detailed, and certainly the more thoroughly it is done, the easier the passage into writing, even though that particular plan may soon be radically altered. For it is performing another function—preparing the mind. It is not only giving it a grasp of the whole enterprise but also forcing it to concentrate on the mechanics of construction. In the next stage, 'writing' will combine with this to produce the more lasting plan.

Provisional working plan

The provisional working plan is abstracted from this. It consists, in essence, of a number of major headings, with sub-headings where appropriate, and an indication of the content (and where it is to be found) to be included under them. I may have a special chart for points I wish to emphasise in the conclusion. The

latter is not easily written, yet is one of the most important sections. One solution, therefore, is to carry forward an ongoing plan of the conclusion, to which notes are added as writing proceeds. All the notes and data headings are systematically reconsidered to check for omissions or misrepresentations. Then the working plan is re-examined for order and for connecting links. These are not too strong at this stage, for the working plan will inevitably be changed once writing commences. In qualitative work especially, it is important to carry this divergent cast of mind through almost to the end product.

Re-worked plan

A re-worked, 'realised' plan emerges in writing the first draft. The preliminary plan will not be slavishly followed, for improved ideas will emerge as you begin to write, Some sections may prove very productive, others less so. In fact, any overall plan may be suspended temporarily while promising lines of thought, themselves with several branches, are investigated. If they prove productive, they may be afforded greater prominence within the scheme, and others relegated. The first draft may thus have a kaleidoscopic quality about it which is stitched together to provide an element of coherence and continuity, and which may bear little resemblance to the preliminary plan. This coherence, however implicit, should be real, and available for strengthening in subsequent drafts. However, what you may find yourself doing at this stage is indulging the development of the separate sections. You have a notion of the finished product, but its eventual quality depends on the quality and strength of its component parts as well as the way they are put together. You cannot make a Rolls-Royce out of Morris 1000 parts.

Final plan

It follows that there must be a further plan, where the linkages, development and explanation are strengthened, and the material, possibly, again re-ordered. It sometimes pays to set the first draft aside for a while to 'mature'. Returning to it with a fresh mind, it is easier to spot strengths and weaknesses. Also new resources are brought to bear, in the form of new thoughts, more 'focused' research and reading, and, most importantly, the reactions of others. Also, by this stage, the pain barrier has been overcome, and the tidying up can be done with greater confidence and equanimity. You have successfully externalised the product, and can now relax and 'chip away' at its improvement, deleting here, adding a further word of explanation there, finding a more mellifluous and accurate phrase perhaps, re-ordering, tightening up, fitting it in to the general framework of research to which it relates, adding references, drawing conclusions.

At this stage the severest tests are applied. What is missing here? What is wrong with this argument? What does it need to strengthen it? How else could

this material be interpreted? How could this be criticised? What prejudices am I indulging? What do I really mean by this? Here there is a nice quote—but is it really needed? Here are some impressive-sounding sentences—but what are they saying? There are some good points in this paragraph—but do they really relate to what goes before and after? Though in some ways easier to do than initial composing, in some ways it is still quite hard to summon up the resolve to rewrite sections once they have been typed. Nonetheless, it has to be done.

The twin principles here, I think, are that one must plan at each stage, but also maintain flexibility. It is not only important to have some sense of the overall scheme—we cannot just sit down and start writing—but equally important to realise that as the intensity of mental involvement with the data increases at each stage, so the previous plan may be amended or discarded. William Walton said he had not wanted to do *Facade* at the time he composed it. His comment later was, 'One sometimes happens to do something very good by mistake'. This is equally true of writing. One must aim for a productive tension between constructive planning and anarchic, but potentially highly productive, freedom.

With all these stages of writing and levels of thought, it is helpful to the psychological management of one's output to have several projects, or aspects of a project, under way at the same time, all at different stages (see Glaser 1978). Malcolm Bradbury, for example, has various exercises in different typewriters around his house. It is comforting to be in the final stages in one, and to have the option of 'chipping away' at a second draft for another, when one is working up inspiration for assaulting the pain barrier with a third. If they are related, they might 'feed off' each other; and certainly allow for ease of switching between psychological states, thus maximising the use of one's time and energies. This, however, calls for careful scheduling—over-production can lead to under-achievement

Conclusion

The point where rich data, careful analysis and lofty ideas meet the iron discipline of writing is one of the great problem areas in qualitative research. While true to some extent of all kinds of research, it is more of a difficulty in qualitative approaches because of:

- The emphasis in them on the investigator as the chief research instrument, which tends to make such problems appear more personal than they really are
- The nature of the research as process—an open-ended ongoing dialogue between data collection and theory, where the search for ideas militates against early foreclosure
- The necessity, in view of this, to regard the writing-up process as an important inducement to the production of ideas, as well as to their communication
- Writing, analysis and data collection being coterminous

The disjuncture produces pain, which I have argued is the inevitable corollary of the rites of passage we must go through in our quest for a fully matured product. Regarding it like this externalises and demystifies the problem, making it less personal. Further analysis then reveals the patterned nature of the complexities involved, which renders them susceptible to treatment. I have made suggestions, from my own experience, of the form that this 'craft-work' might take—the cultivation of amenable situations; pandering to the Protestant Ethic (if a 'P.E.person') one minute with schedules and quotas, and outflanking it the next with productive use of 'free' time; calculated risk-taking; giving special attention to models of excellence in areas which may be outside that of the research, such as literary or other artistic work; 'cranking up' to the appropriate mental state, and undergoing apparent personality changes; meeting 'blockages' in similar analytical style and applying to them a range of techniques; and maintaining flexibility in the complicated planning procedures without loss of rigour or impetus.

Using such techniques, we might eventually come to believe, like Graham Greene, that it is the rest of the world that is mad, and not us:

> Writing is a form of therapy; sometimes I wonder how all those who do not write, compose or paint can manage to escape the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in the human situation.
>
> (quoted in Lodge 1996:79)

Chapter 2
A standard approach to organisation

> First the book must be threshed out.
>
> (Lichtenberg 1789)

> Let us consider another miracle—the mutation of a mouthful of air into a penful of ink.
>
> (Anthony Burgess 1992:71)

Introduction

An early problem is how to organise one's article, report or book. There are many ways of doing this according to what one wishes to convey and to whom. As Stake (1995:122) notes, 'A write-up can be organised any way that contributes to the reader's understanding of the case'. In effect, however, journal articles, academic books and theses largely follow a traditional model, at least in relation to the presentation of empirical material—the main concern of qualitative research. I shall consider some examples of this in this chapter (see also Strauss 1987: chapter 10; Gilbert 1993: chapter 16). Nonetheless it needs to be borne in mind that this is a matter of convention. As noted in the Introduction, modes of presentation are very much under debate at present—and conventions can change. I shall consider some alternative forms of writing in Chapter 3. I will begin by looking at the structure of a recent journal article. I will then go on to examine in more detail the central section of such articles and the basis for the whole construction—the organisation of data.

A traditional structure

I selected an article fairly randomly, noting only that in large part it followed the standard structure. It is from the *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* and was written by Stephen Ball and Carol Vincent (Ball and Vincent 1998). Its features are as follows:

Title

The title of the article is '"I heard it on the grapevine": "hot" knowledge and school choice'. The title is very important and worth considerable thought. This will be the main signal to others that you have constructed something worthy of their attention, and will identify the product for posterity. It should be

- Informative. It should tell the reader what the article is about.
- Accurate. It should not mislead or overclaim.
- Succinct and clear. I once examined a Ph.D. thesis whose title ran to four lines. Even then, and after reading the title several times, it was not entirely clear what the thesis was about. Some are tautologous as well as verbose —'Towards a tentative outline of a provisional model…'.
- Designed to awaken interest.

I would say the title of our chosen article meets all these criteria. It manages to incorporate three major components of the article—school choice (the general area), the 'grapevine' (the organising concept for the data) and 'hot' knowledge (a theoretical product). It does this clearly, briefly, and the quotation in the first part adds extra interest (see also Wolcott 1990:70–1).

Authors

How you wish to be known also requires some attention. You might be 'Lizzy Dripping' to your friends, and that might be the name that appears on drafts, but you might prefer your authorial name that actually appears in print to be 'Elizabeth F.Dripping'. Then again, you might not. Women might wish to consider whether they want to be known by their maiden or married name if they are indeed different. The point is it does need thought and a principled decision, as this will be the name that for writing purposes you will be known as, and your writings referenced and filed under.

Abstract

All journal articles require an abstract—a summary of about 200 words of the content. This gives readers a little more idea of the content before they commit themselves to reading the whole article. It is also used in collections of abstracts, where readers can readily find articles on particular topics. It is a useful thing to do anyway, as it reveals the basic structure and argument and forces you to try to be absolutely clear about what you are saying. In a book, I like to do abstracts of each chapter in a section of the introduction called 'Structure of the book', as in this volume. This is so that both reader and writer can see the whole book in outline. The exercise might bring about some reorganising, yielding a more effective structure.

Introduction

Ball and Vincent begin with a quotation. The idea is to spark a little interest with an apposite comment, designate a key point in a particularly telling way, and form a link with the person making the comment. But it is not absolutely necessary. The Introduction contextualises. It will establish the relevance of the subject matter, in terms of things like theoretical development, new understanding of a key issue, and policy implications. In this case, the uncertainties for parents of choosing a school for their children in the educational market is a big current issue not only for parents, but for sociologists and educationists seeking to make theoretical sense of what is currently happening in education.

The authors go on to discuss previous studies of parental choice of school, identify limitations and omissions, and indicate how they are going to try to help fill a gap. Alternative approaches would be to develop previous literature, to test it, or to take up suggestions others have made.

Next, Ball and Vincent introduce the dominant theme of 'grapevining', and point out that while previous papers of theirs have examined its content, they will be more concerned in this article with its structure and functions. They indicate how they will be analysing their data, which will be in relation to social class differences.

There is a very brief reference to research methods; too brief, some might think. Normally this might merit a section to itself following the introduction, but there should certainly be an extended paragraph. The authors here might be relying on the exposition of their methods that is readily available to the readers of the journal in their previous articles on the same research.

At the end of the Introduction is a brief summary of what they are going to do, making the aims and objectives very clear. Such summaries discreetly placed around an article are very 'reader-friendly' devices. They also help the writer in the same way as does compiling the abstract.

Defining the grapevine

In effect this is a section on theory. In qualitative research, it has often been generated from the data in the section that follows, but in the written up article the theoretical lines through which the data will be analysed are presented in advance—necessarily so as this is not a research methods paper on how the research was done, but one using theory and data to explicate an issue. Sometimes this theoretical discussion is included in an extended introduction, sometimes in a section under the heading of 'Theory', or, as here, the particular theory highlighted in the text. As the 'grapevine' is the major concept in the article, it is headlined. The concept is explained and linked to related literature on informal social networks, gossip and rumour. The ideas of 'local structures of feeling' from Raymond Williams, and 'local class structures' are introduced; and

then distinctions between 'hot' and 'cold' knowledge are explained and illustrated. We are now set up for the presentation of the data.

Analysing the grapevine

This is the data section, and it is by far the lengthiest. There are three broad sets of parental responses to the grapevine—suspicion, doubt and acceptance. The first has three subdivisions of 'filling out', 'rejecting' and 'exclusion'. These categories are illustrated with lengthy quotations from transcribed interviews. The authors draw attention to factors influencing each group, such as social class, but also 'a kaleidoscope of other factors'. I shall say more about data analysis and organisation in general later.

Conclusion

Following the data section there is often a 'discussion of results', but sometimes, as here, this is incorporated in an extended conclusion. The authors conclude that the substance of the grapevine is conditioned by where you are and who you know. They pick up some of the points from the literature made in the Introduction, and argue that access to particular grapevines is socially structured and patterned, though not straightforwardly. They then broaden the discussion to relate to more general theory and higher levels of abstraction, such as responses to 'authoritative knowledge' in late modern society, and indications of a 'crisis of representation'. They refer to the political-economic context, where 'choice of school is being subsumed within general class-related strategies of consumption'. They end by emphasising the necessity of seeing choice as a socially constructed activity.

Notes

Ball and Vincent have several notes here that have been indicated by a number (1–7) in the text. These contain information that is thought relevant, but would get in the way of the developing narrative or argument if placed in the body of the text. It is a legitimate device, and indeed the notes of some texts make for good reading (the footnotes in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* have the reputation of being better than the text). On the whole, however, I find them a distraction—if a footnote is indicated I want to look it up there and then. If they contain essential information they can often be worked into the text. Where this is not possible, I would advise they be kept to a minimum.

References

There follows a list of references of every work cited in the text. They secure the account within the literature, indicating the particular selection made, and

provide the sources in case readers wish to check up, follow up or develop the research. It is essential that these be complete, both as a list and within themselves, accurate, and correctly formatted, otherwise the acceptance of a paper, otherwise satisfactory, might be jeopardised. Sherman, a journal editor, notes that 'in all frankness, writers are extraordinarily careless when referencing their work. Some references are missing altogether, some are incomplete, and others are inaccurate—not to mention inconsistencies in citing references' (Sherman 1993:237).

Appendix

The authors present two tables that summarise the social class data for the families quoted in the text. This is in terms of mothers' and fathers' occupation and education, ethnicity and housing. This information is useful and appropriately situated as its specificity would have been out of place within the body of the text. Research instruments, such as a questionnaire or a sample interview, are other items often included in an appendix.

Organisation by category

The central part of the standard empirical qualitative article is how you organise your data—as in 'Analysing the grapevine', above. This will have implications for how you develop your theory. A common mode is to identify the major categories. What categories you decide on will depend on the aims of the study and your interests. They may be to do with perspectives on a particular issue, certain activities or events, relationships between people, situations and contexts, or behaviours. There is no one master framework. But there are tests of adequacy. Categories need to be:

- Generated from the data, not superimposed on the data from some other study
- Exhaustive (*all* the data fit somewhere into the categories)
- Mutually exclusive (cases go in one category and one alone)
- On the same level of analysis, and relating to the same criteria

These criteria need to be relevant to the topic of research.

One usually has to have several shots at this before coming to the most appropriate arrangement. Such distillation helps one to encapsulate more of the material in a glance, as it were, and to gain an overview. Even so, you will probably need to revise first attempts. You may find that:

- Two categories are really two sides of the same one.
- One category is really a sub-category of another.
- The categories are generated from a frame that you feel uncomfortable with.
- Similar material appears under more than one category.

The following are some fairly typical examples of categorisation:

Example 1: Paul Willis (1977) 'Elements of a culture', from Learning to Labour

Willis chose to divide his book into two parts—'Ethnography' and 'Analysis'. These were the main features of the lads' culture, which formed the 'Ethnography' section:

- Opposition to authority and rejection of the conformist
- The informal group
- Dossing, blagging and wagging
- Having a 'laff'
- Boredom and excitement
- Sexism
- Racism

Under these headings, Willis reconstructed the lads' outlook on life, using liberal portions of transcript to build up a graphic and evocative picture. Notice that the categories include a mixture of the lads' own terms, which alerted the researcher to major areas of activity, and Willis' own summarising features. Willis then went on to 'analysis' and theory in Part 2.

Example 2: John Beynon (1985) '"Sussing out" teachers: pupils as data gatherers'

Beynon observed a class of boys during all their lessons in the first half-term of their first year at a comprehensive school. The general interest at first was in 'initial encounters' between boys and teachers. He became interested in 'the strategies the boys employed to find out about classrooms and type teachers; the specific nature of the knowledge they required; and the means they employed to (in their words) "suss out" teachers' (121). He found there was a main group of boys who used a wide variety of 'sussing' strategies. One of his first tasks, therefore, was to organise his data and identify the kinds of strategy. He found six major groups:

- Group formation and communication
- Joking
- Challenging actions (verbal)
- Challenging actions (non-verbal)
- Interventions
- Play

Within these, he put forward sub-categories of activities. For example, the category of 'Joking' included the sub-categories of:

- Open joking
- Jokes based on pupils' names
- Risqué joking
- Lavatorial humour
- Repartee and wit
- Set pieces
- Covert joking
- 'Backchat' and 'lip'
- Closed joking
- Michelle: a private joke

This, then, shows an organisation of a mass of data using categories and sub-categories, each being graphically described by classroom observations, notes and recorded dialogue and interaction. The effect is to re-create 'what it was like' for these pupils and their teachers and to show the considerable depth and range of their 'sussing' activities. Beynon then went on to theorise about the functions of 'sussing' within the establishment of control in the classroom.

Example 3: Howard Gannaway (1976) 'Making sense of school'

One of the questions raised in the construction of categories is the interconnections between them. There had been a number of studies of pupils' views of teachers which simply identified certain prominent features. Gannaway was concerned to identify priorities and interrelationships among his categories. He summarised his conclusions as shown in Figure 2.1.

This kind of exposition with due illustrations might make a lively article in its own right. But it does raise further questions. As outlined here, it is concerned with the 'how' of pupil behaviour in specific circumstances. This is how the particular group of students in the sample sees things. The further questions are concerned with why, who, where and when. Are these responses culturally and historically specific? Do they apply to students of different age, sex, social class, ethnicity, ability, nationality? Are they consistent over time and between situations? How do they relate to official conceptions of how they should respond and the requirements made of them within the prescribed educational programme? Such questions might be raised in the conclusion to the article as an indicator to further research; but they might equally serve as a way into theorising within the article itself.

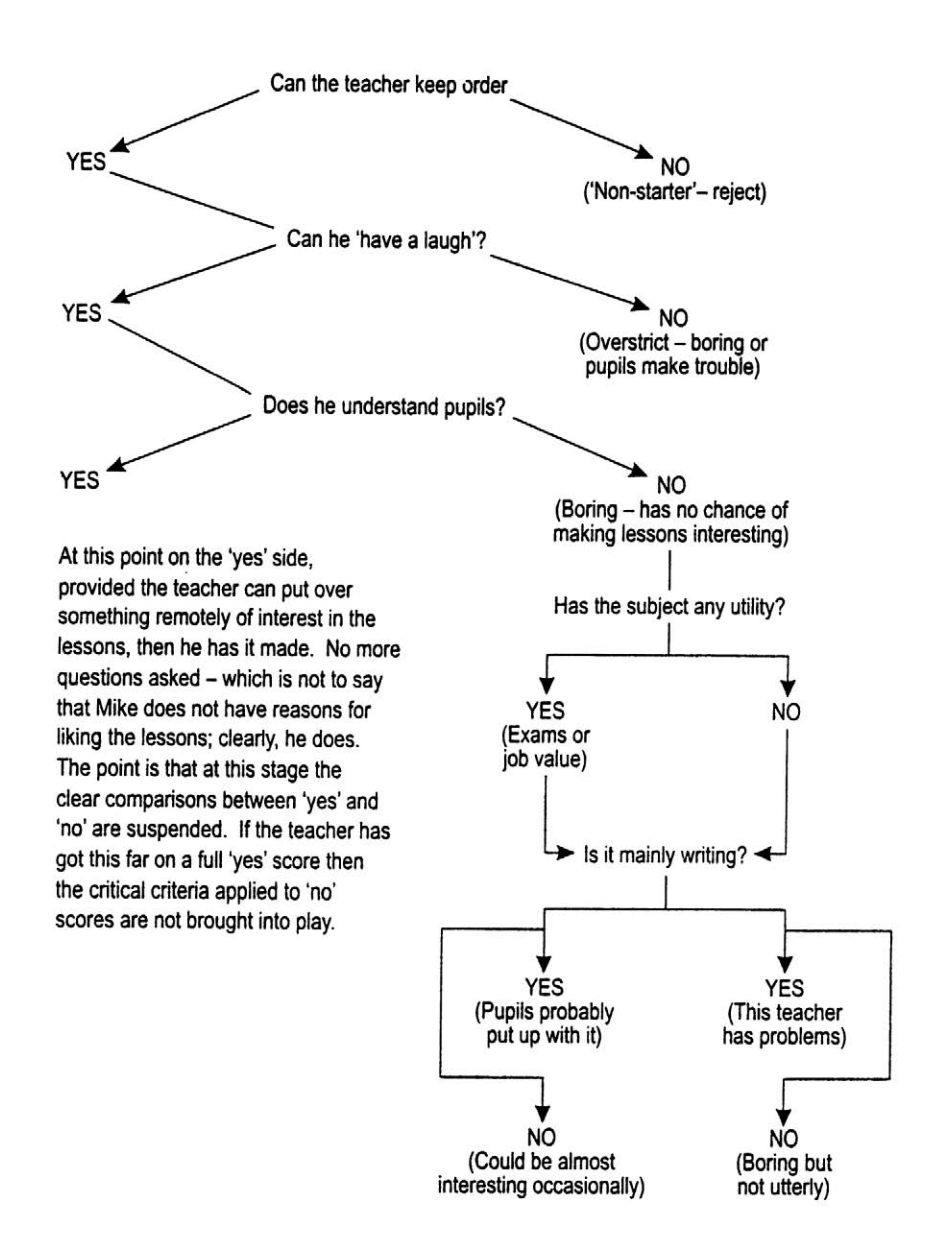


Figure 2.1An evaluation scheme for teachers

Source: Gannaway (1976)

Example 4: my analysis of a single interview

The interview was with a fifteen year-old boy in the last year of his schooling in the early 1970s. My aim in writing up the interview was to try to convey the main features of his perspective on school (see Table 2.1). Here I try to indicate different levels of category and their interconnection. The analysis also illustrates how categories often include polar dimensions. The contrasts in the latter alert you to the category.

This is by no means the only way to analyse this particular material, but it is one way. It illustrates these features of qualitative analysis:

- It divides the analysis into four interconnecting levels:

  (a) Attempts to establish the major categories in the boy's perspective; they are presented, as they appear in the interview, as antitheses, good and bad.
  (b) One line leads to interest in school and work, the other to boredom.
  (c) The first produces work, the second a number of messing about strategies.
  (d) This is a kind of marker for some theory that might be relevant

- The spiralling relationship between data collection, analysis and writing up. Writing is part of the analysis (Coffey and Atkinson 1996)—and also part of the data collection. Some of the categories above are more strongly supported

Table 2.1 **Features of a perspective**

A. FEATURES	
1. Freedom	*Control*
The boy referred to 'making up your own minds', 'you can take lessons you want to take', 'it's up to you to learn', 'go in what clothes you want', 'more choice', need 'more trips' and 'to get out more', 'need to be allowed to finish'; 'don't force you to learn'	They were 'chained together', 'made to work', 'cooped up', 'teachers would get the law in', you had to 'do what you were told, go to lessons, wear uniform
2. Personal	*Depersonal*
preferred junior school where you were with one teacher all the time	References to bureaucracy, divisions of time and labour, rules and regulations; doesn't like doing questions and writing out of books, copying off the blackboard at the teacher's pace

3. *Manual, or utilitarian, vocational*	*Mental, or academic*
'I started making stuff and asking them if I could stay off history and go into the metalwork room'; 'When we have theory I don't usually like that, so I ask him if I can do practical'	'Well, geography is no good to you really, is it, stuff like that'
4. *Masculine*	*Feminine*
references to leisure pursuits like motor bikes, football, war films	Doesn't like 'love stories and things like that'

B. EFFECT	
Interest	*Boredom*
Active, ownership, learning	'Not doing anything, waste of time'; 'everything's to a routine and you just get bored with it'; 'it seems about five hours longer than the lesson really is'; 'it seems to drag on a lot', 'any chance you get, you laze about; all you do is loll about'; 'teacher's droning on'

C. BEHAVIOUR	
Work	*Messing about*
	Many strategies mentioned, for example, absence, running off, knocking off, dossing, work as therapy (ie it becomes so boring 'you start doing stuff to occupy your mind'), escapism, disruption, playing up, rebellion, negotiation, 'getting the rest of the kids not to like it', making noises

D. EXPLANATION
Possibly relate to social class, community (cf. Dubberley); school organisation (Lacey); peer culture.

by the data than others. So I would want to re-interview the boy to test and fill out this formulation. In the course of this, new categories might emerge, and old ones disappear. Or priorities might emerge among them. If, of course, I were interested in a group of pupils, I would want to interview more of them, for the same purpose. The analysis procedure would be the same as for this one.

- Some parts of the analysis are still hypothetical. Part D, for example, points the way toward possibly relevant theory and literature. Reading some of this literature then feeds back into the developing organisation. Ultimately, the article might be organised on theoretical rather than empirical lines.

Identification of interconnecting categories and dimensions in this way can lead to the formation of a typology. I have suggested (Woods 1986:139–40) that these

> can improve our vision and sharpen our focus by drawing together a mass of detail into an organised structure wherein the major types are indicated. They can give us an idea of the range of such types. They point to relationships and interconnections, and provide a basis for comparison and for theory-construction.

Interestingly, one of the foremost advocates of new forms of writing in the postmodernist movement, Laurel Richardson, considers typologies to be

> excellent rhetorical devices for framing qualitative work, for they can be written with an open-endedness, help the researcher sift through ethnographic materials in a focused way, and permit the writing to be about something—as opposed to everything—in the project.
>
> (1990:51)

Organisation by theme

Another common mode of organising derives from the identification of a common theme throughout the material. Ely *et al.* (1997) refer to the search for themes as 'one of the most frequently mentioned analytic approaches used by qualitative researchers'. By 'theme' they mean 'a statement of meaning that 1. runs through all or most of the pertinent data, or 2. one in the minority that carries heavy emotional or factual impact' (Ely *et al.* 1991:150).

Categorising can then follow on the basis of aspects of the theme. This might be said to be theoretically, rather than empirically led. The latter, as represented by the examples above, could develop into the former. Consider the following examples.

Example 1: Bob Jeffrey and Peter Woods (1998) Testing Teachers

In a research project exploring the effects of school inspections on primary teachers we collected data on inspectors' own views of inspections. We could organise these by category well enough, but this did not seem to rise much above a simple level of description. We had to ask ourselves what was distinctive about the inspectors' views. The clue to this lay in the existing literature. Much sociological analysis had laid emphasis on the managerialist, technicist aspects of recent government policy promoted by allegiance to a marketing ideology (Ball 1994). But while this was certainly prominent in the inspectors' responses, there was something else also—more of a humanist element—which to a large extent stands in contradistinction to managerialism and technicism. These contradictions, we eventually came to see, were a prominent feature. The complex mixture of the two discourses was systematically tracked through the chapter under two main headings: 'Interpreting and operationalising a managerialist discourse', and 'Validation' (i.e. how the inspectors validated their work) with summary lists at the ends of each section. The summary which followed the first section is shown in Table 2.2.

An attempt was then made to explain these contradictions in the conclusion. Briefly, we saw them as a product of positioning in the hierarchical managerial chain. Inspectors faced in two directions—towards their superior and defining body, Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education), and towards teachers. They also had their own personal values to take into account. They resolved the conflicts that these matters threw up and legitimised their actions by selecting among the discourses.

Table 2.2 **Contrasting discourses**

Managerialist discourse	*Professional/developmental discourse*
View schools the same	View schools differently
Hierarchical accountability	Mutual accountability
Passive auditing	Active auditing
Objective evaluation	Subjective evaluation
Observation as control	Observation as aid to validity
Systematic grading	Negotiative feedback
External targets	Internal targets
Authoritative quality control	Developmental quality assurance
Expertise as power	Expertise as aid to professionalism
Legal authority	Moral authority

Source: Jeffrey and Woods (1998:30)

Table 2.3 Teaching imperatives

Imperative	*Experiential site*	*Degree of choice*	*Outcome*	*Period*
Dilemma	Situational	Free	Creative Resolution	Pre-1988
Tension	Personal	Limited	Strategic Coping	(Post-ERA)
Constraint	Structural	Little or none	Survival, personal adjustment, resistance, stress, etc.	(Post-Ofsted)

Source: Woods et al. 1997

Example 2: Peter Woods et al. (1997) Restructuring Schools, Reconstructing Teachers

In this book we sought to bring together some of the results of four separate research projects. These would all eventually have their own individual reports. But as they addressed similar issues in different ways, the comparisons yielded further possibilities. We had a broader perspective, for example, on changes in the teacher and headteacher roles in the wake of restructuring, and on changes in teacher culture. However, while we could see clear opportunities for separate chapters, we needed a framework to tie the book together. 'Restructuring' did this to some extent, but the projects and the book were more about teachers' experience of restructuring, so we needed a theme at that level. Was there a theme, therefore, that ran throughout our representation of different aspects of this? Again, the solution came from the comparisons between the existing literature and our material. We had for some time been interested in 'dilemma' theory as presented by the Berlaks in 1981. They had shown that the teacher's day in an English primary school of the 1970s was one of almost continuous confrontation by and resolution of dilemmas. These were characterised by conflict situations involving incompatibilities, but a degree of teacher choice as to their resolution, such as whether to teach the whole class or individuals, or whether to treat the child as a 'whole child' or as a 'student' (Berlak and Berlak 1981). Since then, however, restructuring had curtailed teacher choice. The scenarios our researches were producing were marked by disturbance, the irresolution of conflict, and stress. Teaching had become more than the professional resolution of dilemmas. We therefore developed concepts of 'tension' and 'constraint' from our various bodies of data. The general progression dilemmas to tensions to constraints from the 1970s to the 1990s then formed a developmental theme running through the book. The overall framework is represented in Table 2.3.

We stressed that these were tendencies, not absolutes. All three types of imperative have been experienced to some degree or other in all the periods, and things can move in the reverse direction in some situations and with some individuals. But we felt we had sufficient evidence to suggest a *general* tendency, and this gave us our structure. Note, too, that the formulation had something to do with our own theoretical predilections. Others might have chosen to interpret the material through labour process theory, or poststructuralism. Choice of theory will be influenced by criteria of relevance, explanatory power and potential, and strength, but also by our own values and experiences.

Example 3: Peter Woods (1993d) 'The charisma of the critical other'

In some research on exceptional events in schools promoting inspired teaching and leaps of learning, one resultant paper followed this line of development:

The genesis stage

I noticed that all the events had a number of things in common. One of these was the use of experts other than teachers from outside the school—a children's writer, a group of architects, a drama expert, archeologists. I felt that this merited an article. I could have written an article simply cataloguing their various contributions. I had begun to do that, simply to order the data so that I could 'see' it better, and had constructed two, apparently separate, unconnected sections. But I felt that something more was needed. I needed to conceptualise their contributions, to raise the discussion to another level that might have more general applicability.

The exploration stage

To help towards this end I asked myself a number of questions. What exactly were these outside experts contributing, and how? What was special about it? What did they do that teachers were unable to do? How did their contributions fit within the educational framework of the school and within teacher plans? What role were they performing, and how did this compare with the roles of the teachers? What was distinctive about the effect they had on teachers and pupils?

The discovery stage

Clearly they were introducing special first-hand skills and knowledge. Comments from teachers and pupils showed that they were held in high esteem. There was something exciting in their participation, and a special quality in the relationships they fostered with the children, involving trust, inspiration,

admiration. They were consequently highly motivating. How could one depict this effect?

The ideas stage

I experimented with the notion of 'charisma'. This was not just pulled out of the air. I have always been intrigued by the nature of charisma and its effects, ever since hearing my old mentor, Frank Musgrove, lecture on the topic in my student days. I can still recall him concluding with the opinion that 'We need more charisma in teaching'. I agree, and perhaps that is why I was studying exceptional events anyway, though that is not how I saw it in the first instance. Here, possibly, was an opportunity to explore the idea a little further.

The confirmatory stage

At this point I consulted the literature. I went back to my old lecture notes, reread Weber, Freund and others on charisma; and for contrast and to highlight its characteristics, effects and significance, some commentaries on the prevailing condition in schools, the obverse of charisma, one of bureaucratic rationality (Rizvi 1989). This confirmed the appropriateness of 'charisma' as a centralising concept, and suggested some aspects that could appear in the organisation of the article. Further, looking again at my data, I could see that the two apparently unconnected sections were indeed connected within the concept of charisma.

The getting-it-right stage

'Getting it right' is not meant to imply that there is only one correct, valid outcome; but rather that there is a stage in writing where things come together and work as well as you judge they can. You are making a point worth making and doing it in a way you feel satisfied with. You do get a feeling that this is 'about right', 'as good as it gets' or 'my best shot' (Wolcott 1990:88). This stage 'means more than mere accuracy. It means portraying something significant of human experience' (Charmaz and Mitchell 1997:206). A number of drafts and one conference presentation followed the confirmatory stage. At this stage I was teasing out the properties of the charisma and its effects—and testing out my tentative analysis at the conference. Looking again at the data from the viewpoint of charisma, I saw that there were in fact three sections, not two. The subsections also now seemed to fall into place—a good test of the overall schema. The charisma of the 'critical others' derived from:

- The fact of being 'other'. They challenged the taken-for-granted, introduced novelty, and presented new role models for students.
- Personal qualities that induced trust, faith and inspiration, contributed to the generation of 'togetherness' amongst those involved, and were motivating.

- Professional qualities which contributed to the authenticity of teachers' work. The work they did was real, not simulated. They integrated knowledge, fostered information and communication skills, and validated teachers' and pupils' work within their professional fields.

This may look rather neat in the end, and one often wonders 'Why didn't I think of that in the first place?' I very rarely do, however, without going through this sort of process. And if the process looks straightforward, it did involve a lot of work, especially 'getting it right'.

Blockages and breakthroughs

How does one identify themes? The short answer is by studying the data, over and over. There may be a clear prominent theme; or more typically, it may just seem a collection of facts and opinions with no obvious sign of how to proceed. This is a major blockage point. Each time I confront a body of data I have no idea where the eventual plan is going to come from. Will this be the time when the brain coagulates into cold porridge and no ideas emerge? Despair may follow. Where do we go from here? How can we make sense, something interesting, something new, of this? How can we rise above the morass of detail?

I have found that if the data are of any value, a breakthrough usually comes. It is a relief when it happens, for it seems a huge impenetrable barrier at the time. Then one insight, one realisation that sees connections, can unlock a whole chain of thought. I find the following strategies helpful in these circumstances (in addition to those discussed in Chapter 1):

- Persistence. Don't give up. Keep looking, keep thinking, but in combination with the following strategies.
- Variability. Study the data at different times of the day or week, in different situations, when you are in different moods, so that you come at the problem from different angles.
- Search. Seek to reinforce your own knowledge and creativity base by reading or re-reading notes, transcripts and relevant literature, and by talking to others. A sentence, a remark, might stimulate a new line of thought.
- Look for contrasts, inconsistencies, contradictions.
- Play, experiment. Construct sketches, figures, diagrams, flowcharts. Summarise data and tabulate them on a chart. Rehearse a number of possible modes of organisation. Be flexible. Keep chipping away at it. Move text around, add bits here, delete bits there. Some schemes look as if they might work—save these to compare and/or to build on, jettison the rest.
- Appreciate the value of imperfection. Recognise that the first draft is probably only one of many. It might not be very good at all, not one that you would want to show to others, but it is a basis on which to build.

- Write. Often the solution to blockage lies in the activity itself. Resolve that 'tomorrow morning I will really start to write'. Providing that all the necessary resources are to hand, such as good data, adequate preparation on your part, and conducive situation, forcing yourself in this way may yield a few possibly excruciatingly painful sentences which nonetheless gradually free up the mind. This was true of this particular chapter. In two weeks I had only written one sentence, and that was a quote from somebody else (which I later deleted). Eventually I made greater and more concentrated and realistic efforts, and summoned up the necessary resolve to get started. Once moving, the construction of the chapter proceeded reasonably well.
- Make the task manageable. It may be that you see a way to organise part of your data but not all. If you do not improve on the plan after due reflection, start writing out the part that works. Again, the act of writing brings a kind of closer concentration and might lead to your seeing a way to incorporating the whole.
- Keep a file. This will include the data of course, but also notes on and photocopies of the relevant literature; and some thoughts and ideas that you might have had at different times during data collection. Some of these might have been fleeting thoughts with only possible relevance at the time. If not recorded, they might well vanish. Keeping them in a file and then reviewing the file at the time of analysis is another aid to thinking.
- When you do start to write, keep a 'table of contents', i.e. a summary list of headings and sub-headings reproduced at the beginning of the text. This enables you to see the whole construction easily, and to make amendments if necessary. The overall organisation can get lost in the richness of the data of the text. Or, you might proceed on a good organisational basis for a while, then 'lose it', the words coming out in a format that not even you can understand. The summary list can help clarify.

The illustrations in this chapter represent a largely conventional approach to the writing up of qualitative research. I shall consider some alternatives in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3
Alternative forms of writing

> Writing does not come easily to most people because of our early training. To be 'proper' it has to be done to a certain set form—that of the academic essay, formal letter, *vilanelle,* or short story with a beginning, middle, and a sting in the tail like so many of the 2250-word radio stories. Writing, for most professionals, is for reports: a burdensome and long-winded, hated but essential, means of justifying their work to the authorities.
>
> (Bolton 1994:61)

Variations on the standard approach

There are many variations on the basic model of a journal article, and there are deviations from it. Some articles might have no data, for example discussions of the literature, or purely theoretical expositions, or philosophical or methodological debates. Non-empirical articles in fact constitute the majority in some journals, such as the *British Journal of Educational Studies.* However, many reflective pieces follow the same principles as outlined in Chapter 2, except that the data is a given, and critical reflection follows upon it. They would not, therefore, need sections on methods and data, and the organisation of the rest would be determined by the particular argument being made. A.Hargreaves' (1988) article, for example, on 'Teaching quality: a sociological analysis' is a review of the literature pointing to sociological factors that affect teaching quality in contrast to the government's 'common sense' view, with markedly different implications for policy. Its construction follows a simple formula:

- Introduction. Identification of the current pressing issue of 'teaching quality', government action being taken and the apparent 'theories' on which it is based. Introduction of the argument of the paper—an alternative explanation of 'poor' teaching quality based on sociological factors.
- Discussion of the official view on teaching quality and its deficits, based on analysis of official documents.

- Presentation of an alternative view based on a review of sociological literature. This section is divided into subsections, such as 'situational constraints', 'examinations' and 'subject specialism', rather as data is categorised in empirical papers.
- Conclusion. Summary of the main points of this alternative view contrasted with the official view. Finally, the punch line—the implications for policy, which are markedly different from that being taken as stated at the beginning of the paper.

Empirical articles can vary considerably. Those based on life histories, biographies, events or histories, for example, might follow more of a narrative structure, interweaving theory and data as they progress. Frank Musgrove's (1975) article on 'Dervishes in Dorsetshire: an English commune', is based around day-by-day extracts from a diary the author made when he stayed there for a week. Wolcott's (1994) account of his experiences with 'Brad', a drop-out who took up residence on Wolcott's land with dramatic consequences, takes the form of a story, with the analysis interwoven with the tale. It begins in classic story style: '"I guess if you're going to be here, I need to know something about you, where you're from, and what kind of trouble you are in", I said to the lad, trying not to reveal my uncertainty, surprise and dismay at his uninvited presence until I could learn more about his circumstances' (68). There is detailed description of character and behaviour, but basically it is a story about cultural acquisition. Some articles have been structured around an extended metaphor (for example Pirrie 1997; Wilson 1998) or go through variations on a theme, as I discuss later. There are even more adventurous formats.

New approaches

The 'literary turn' has brought a rash of new approaches to representation. A few examples might give the flavour of this new writing. Ellis and Bochner (1992) present a multivoiced narrative on an abortion which is

> meant to be performed as a 'staged reading' so that nuances of feeling, expression, and interpretation could be communicated more clearly…. An audience that witnesses a performance of this text thus is subjected to much more than words: they see facial expressions, movements and gestures; they hear the tones, intonations, and inflections of the actors' voices; and they can feel the passion of the performers.
>
> (80)

In a more fully fledged 'performance' of the text, Paget (1990:150–1) says she is not separating the analytic report from the experience of life as it is lived:

> I am privileging the *experience* of knowledge, the communicative act ofshowing and telling how it happened that, on three separate occasions, aphysician diagnosed depression on a woman who was a cancer patient Performance privileges the experience, reawakens and recovers the audience's capacity to participate and feel too. In performing the text, theaudience's attention is focused on a vast range of signifiers of meaning (make-up, dress, stage-set, the gender of the performers, etc.). The audienceenters a performance context, comes with a different awareness of thedemands of attention, comes with the intention of participating in the playof emotions and the play of interpreting signifiers of the performance.

In 'readers' theatre', actors read selected excerpts from data that are thematically linked. They 'act' in a highly stylised way on a simple stage with minimal scenery (Donmoyer and Yennie-Donmoyer 1991; 1998). Adams *et al.* (1998) choose this method to represent the complex ways in which women teachers construct their life and work histories. They say, 'Although the life histories have been collected individually, they have been orchestrated into a chorus of voices that express multiple ways of knowing and being, the whole becoming greater than the sum of its parts' (383).

Neumann (1996:194) comments on the 'new journalism':

> Like many social scientists invigorated by fiction and drama, literary journalists are also interested in telling a 'good story', playing with language,metaphors, deep characterisation, and mixing literary genres. As with anygood novel, short story, play or poem, the value of their reports is found intheir lines, and they offer appropriate examples for those who are interestedin mixing and blurring genres, and writing 'messy' and indeterminate texts.

Richardson (1994a) argues the merits of poetry. Commenting on nine short poems she had written for the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* under the title of 'Nine poems: marriage and the family', she writes:

> In 'Nine Poems'…the narrative is only implied. The poems are short *lyric* poems, each a 'mini-narrative', an episode, representing an emotionally and morally charged experience. The order of the poems implies a plot, but the 'spaces' between the poems invite greater readerly responses and interpretive work than would a long narrative poem. The nine poems could also be reordered, implying yet different plots. Subsuming 'nine poems' under the rubric 'Marriage and the family', moreover, implies a meta-narrative, the sociocultural construction of those two concepts 'marriage' and 'family', and a seeming 'relationship', that between 'marriage *and* the family'. The implied narrative would change if 'Nine Poems' were

> subtitled 'Gender' or 'Maturing', or 'Socialisation' or 'Treason' or 'Paper Airplanes'.
>
> (8)

Richardson argues that this method, involving a series of lyric poems, is far more successful than more traditional methods at conveying the sense of 'lived experience' to the reader.

Many other interesting products are emerging. They include poetically crafted narrative (Eisner 1993); story and fiction (Rowland 1991; Winter 1991; Bolton 1994); polyvocal, heteroglossic, multigenre constructions (Barone 1990b; Rose 1990; Quantz 1992; Richardson 1994b); co-or multi-authored and 'messy' texts (Marcus 1994); film and video (Myerhoff 1978; Rollwagen 1988); photography (Walker 1993; Schratz and Walker 1995; Preskill 1995); art (Simons 1994); mixed genres (drawing, for example, on literary, artistic and scientific writing styles—Richardson 1994b); 'hypertext' (Becker (1994)—a text whose parts are multiply-linked (as in Joyce 1990) rather than joined in a linear progression. A number of discussions of experimental forms of writing are now readily available (see for example Ellis and Flaherty 1992; Richardson 1994b; Van Maanen 1995; Ellis and Bochner 1996; Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Denzin 1997).

This is all very exciting, but most researchers, concerned about truth criteria and how you demonstrate validity, adhere to the traditional model. Bailey (1996: 108) notes that these forms of writing 'are not for everyone…they-are still not the standard style. Many field researchers situate their writing between realist tales and experimental writing'. This is my own position. I see no reason to abandon established criteria of worth in academic representation, but I do feel that some of these new forms promise to reach parts of social understanding that established methods cannot reach.

Writing for different audiences

Different purposes and different audiences require different styles of writing. Using the same material, we can employ a journalistic style for a brief report in a weekly magazine; an interactional, conversational style for a teaching document; or a theoretical, academic style for a learned journal. Richardson (1990) has a useful discussion on 'writing for diverse audiences'. From the same piece of research on single women involved with married men she produced academic publications and a 'trade book' (*The New Other Woman* 1985) written for both lay and professional audiences and designed to have a 'liberatory effect on its readers' (1990:32). Five major devices shaping this book were

- Encoding—the language and literary devices that are used. For a trade book this would involve 'jazzy titles, attractive covers, lack of specialised jargon, marginalisation of methodology, common-world metaphors and images, and

book blurbs and prefatory material about the 'lay' interest in the material' (32). Compare academic encoding, which would follow the lines of the articles discussed in Chapter 2 above, and would be theoretical, methodological, and contain appropriate academic terms and references.

- Narrative stance. There are many narrative styles—such as letting those studied tell the story through interview transcript, author telling the story or stories, biography, or experimental writing. Richardson opted for 'analytical chronologies' (37)—the collective story of the subjects of the research enmeshed in a sociological narrative.
- Tone. Richardson was concerned not to appear omniscient, and to have respect for those she wrote about, not treating them as ciphers. So she brings the subjects' voices to the fore, and through her choice of language, terms and quotations, and by intermingling the sociological analysis, she 'decentres' herself as the ultimate authority (39).
- Structuring quotations and biographical narratives. Richardson recommends 'Variety in format and voice':

> You can use one-line quotations, sometimes standing by themselves, sometimes in droves; mid-length quotations by themselves or mixed with one-liners; short phrases quoted within the body of the narrative; longer quotations broken into paragraphs…. Similarly, including quotes with a variety of language patterns, images, slang, and regionalisms makes texts both more alive and more credible. (40)

Because quotes are often skipped over by the reader, careful attention has to be given to how they are presented and contextualised.

- Synechdoche. This is a rhetorical device wherein a part stands for the whole, or vice-versa, such as 'Buckingham Palace said…', 'the pupil is socialised into an anglicised model', 'Come on the school!' The whole of Richardson's book is a synechdoche, in that the 'other woman' is seen not as a deviant case, 'but *exemplifies* in very important respects, the lives of normal contemporary women' (47). This, in fact, is often the case with marginal or apparently deviant groups—they reveal in sharp relief characteristics that apply to a whole population. They make good 'critical cases' therefore. A great deal of qualitative research is synecdochical in this way.

  Richardson thus tried to meet both literary and sociological criteria, and to make a difference—for the 'other woman' to be better understood, and for all women to feel more empowered 'to alter the civic discourse about and social opportunities for normal women' (48).

An example of writing for different audiences from my own research involved a study I did in the late 1980s on 'critical events' in schools. These were outstanding events involving much creative teaching and uncommon advances in

learning. An article for the *British Journal of Sociology of Education* laid stress on sociological theory generated from the research. I was concerned here with the functions and effects of critical events (rather than their content), the learning theory or theories within which they were embedded, the common features of their structure, and the conditions under which they arise and prosper. Only small snippets of data were used to illuminate the theory. Where other items are being prepared, in academic articles one is able to cross-reference among them, thus I could say 'Fuller documentation and more extensive discussion of research methodology are given in Woods (1993a:356)'.

Another academic article written for the journal *International Studies in Sociology of Education* (1994d) was also sociological, but looked at the events from the pupils' perspectives. This article in fact derived from a conference on pupils, for which I had been invited to submit a paper. It is doubtful whether it would have been written otherwise. The invitation forced me to consider the pupils' perspectives on critical events, and how such events empowered them, in contrast with the likely increasing incidence of 'alienative learning'. Instances of empowerment, their properties, and the factors aiding their promotion were examined. Prominent among the latter were children acting as 'critical others' (see Chapter 2). Since there was no other publication that could be cited to support this point, the second half of the article was given over to a case study illustrating some ways in which children act as critical others. A further academic article, for the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* (1994b), dealt with methodological matters.

Alternative audiences came into consideration when I was asked to write for a reader on primary education in a postgraduate certificate programme for teachers (Bourne 1994). One immediate change was the title. In sociological circles I had referred to these events as 'critical'—a term with sociological connotations of engendering a radicalising state. Here I chose the term 'exceptional' with a catchy slogan attached, which was derived from a pupil's comment. The title thus became 'Chances of a lifetime: exceptional educational events'. The article was shorter, and focused on the substantive issues, dealing with matters I judged to be of interest to teachers. The structure put the emphasis on learning and teaching. References were kept to a minimum—eight compared to over a hundred in the BJSE article. Again, those wanting more detail were advised that the events were 'reported in full in Woods (1993)' (Bourne 1994:168). There was less sociological jargon, and while the theoretical underpinning was there, it was less pronounced, Examples come to the forefront, as do the people. Pupils and teachers stand out more in the text. In consequence it seems more humanised, and the events are placed within the frame of the readers' experiences. They can identify with the teachers in the text and recognise similar experiences with pupils in their own practice. It is synecdochical in that the events stand for all learning experiences of that particular type in contrast with that of a more traditional nature—though this is just as true of the academic articles.

I give here two examples of how, in limited space, I tried to convey the sense of the voices of others speaking through the text.

Example 1: pupil evaluations

Here I use the device of a series of one-line quotes from pupils across the different events to illustrate a general point. The pupils express their reaction in different ways, but all use striking language, and make some fairly stark comparisons. The effect, I hope, is more complete, more dramatic (but not over-dramatic) and more valid than if only one extended quote, or none, had been used.

> The character of the learning has thus been something special. It gains the highest rating in their educational careers from the students. Stephen still looks for his name in *Rushavenn Time* in the public library. Ian can look back on *Godspell* and feel that 'he helped to please so many people'. For Jo, 'It's something you never forgot…a once-in-a-lifetime chance'. For Matthew, as an experience in his school career to date, 'Emotionally it comes top. Mentally, it comes joint top along with my GCSE results' (he achieved nine A's in these). For Claire, 'the last fourteen months have been the best months of my life'. Two-and-a-half years after the event, the Laxfield pupils, now at secondary school, had lost none of their enthusiasm. They had a feeling they 'had done something worthwhile…that you will keep for years'. Louise said 'it was definitely more interesting (than more formal work) and it's a very good way of learning'. Comparing some of their other experiences, they pointed out they were 'more in charge' of the video project. They 'made up the ideas', with 'the teacher there to help us along'. Those people who wanted more traditional teaching 'should come and find out for themselves'. For Ben, the Chippindale Venture was 'much more exciting' than normal school. 'It was very enjoyable', but it was not just fun because 'it did make you feel as if you could do things better'.
>
> (Woods 1994c:171)

Example 2: community reactions

Here I resort to reported speech and paraphrase, punctuated with some actual comment from members of the community. This is edited and used to fit in and flow with the rest of the text. But I judged it important to identify at least one member of the community, Mr High, who personalises and adds character to the text.

> In the Laxfield project, other beneficiaries were members of the community. Some spoke of the binding and integrating function of the film. The delight of people was not simply at a project well done, but one of

> unique properties that carried elements of excellence and surprise. As well as educational, it had historical and archival worth. It roused a sense of pride in people. It was a Very, very valuable thing to do, and a very nice record for us later'. One governor thought it was 'absolutely brilliant…. They covered literally everything and showed it as it is'. There was so much in it that 'the beauty of it would come out over the years'. Mr High, retired mole-, rat-and rabbit-catcher and agricultural worker, and now a leading light of the Horticultural Society, was similarly impressed. A lot of people told him he was a 'star' in the film, but he didn't know if he was. He was certainly enthusiastic about it—the girl who interviewed him, the coverage of the show, general information—'they didn't miss much out in the village'.
>
> (*ibid.:*172–3)

Finally, a 'journalistic' article of 1,000 words appeared in the *Times Educational Supplement* (1993). It locked into the TES culture immediately, established the article's topicality, and picked up on a graphic metaphor: 'A year ago TES carried an article entitled "The boot goes into topic work". Last month, the other boot went in'. Quotes from the Secretary of State for Education and the Chairman of the National Curriculum Council further anchored the article in current educational debate, specifically the attack on child-centred teaching methods. The article presented the 'bare bones' of the events, punctuated by a few of the most impressive quotes, much abbreviated, from the transcripts, with a simple argument about its newsworthiness. While all of these largely spoke to different audiences, the whole work was brought together in the book of the research, which was aimed at both academics and teachers. The risk, however, with combining different audiences in the same volume is that neither will be satisfied. It might be too sociological for teachers, with its applications to teaching policy and practice unclear, thus attracting the common criticisms of being 'woolly', 'opaque' and 'irrelevant'; and/or it may be too atheoretical for sociologists, for them offering little more than 'tips for teachers'. The challenge is to amalgamate the two, and to demonstrate that any recommendations for practice are theoretically grounded.

This is what we tried to do in *Multicultural Children in the Early Years* (Woods *et al.* 1999). Each chapter again was an analysis of data—an academic presentation; but we also wished to draw out the implications for practice in a little more detail than we have been accustomed to do, based on the theory in the chapters. Previously I have regarded this area as the preserve of teachers. The book is only one body of knowledge available to teachers on which they will base their practice. However, this does not prevent us from making suggestions based on the analysis where these seem appropriate, as they did in this case. The solution, therefore, was to frame them just like that—as suggestions.

We encountered another problem in the body of the chapters. This was a question of tone, as experienced by Richardson, above, and it came about

because our drafts were sociological in the first instance. You can meet all the other criteria of good writing and still not be happy with how you are making a point. If it is not said properly it can have the opposite effect to that desired Perhaps you are being too omniscient, condemnatory, condescending, patronising, facile, superior, unreasonable, unsympathetic, prescriptive, moralistic, evaluatory, judgemental. Striking an appropriate note for the main readership is not an easy task, and it might take several drafts before you get it right.

It is helpful to have clear criteria to guide your drafting. I feel that my writing should be

- Honest—to the research and to oneself. It must be true to the data, and to your own values of rigour in research.
- Full—part of the honesty, leaving nothing relevant out.
- Accurate. The representation must reflect the point wishing to be made.
- Fair. This is crucial in this context. A paragraph might be unduly critical of teachers—it is not 'fair'. In an attempt to correct for this, one might move to the other extreme and remove all suggestion of criticism, thus not being 'honest'.
- Balanced—part of the fairness.

It can be a simple matter of certain words that affect the whole construction of what is written and imply deficit on the part of teachers: 'Inadequate…', 'Insufficient…', 'Failed to…', 'It should be remembered that…'. The same data, however, can often be treated in positive as well as, or instead of, negative ways. For example, in representing teachers' application of a policy, negatively you might stress what they did not do, rather than what they did. The same points could be made by stressing the positive aspects, and then suggesting where else the policy might be applied. Material can be anonymised or generalised, so that the finger of blame is not being pointed at a specific target. The focus can be on policies, practices and issues, rather than particular people and schools.

There is a tendency to identify failings in groups that we study—particularly those with power over other groups—and to construct deficit models; and having done that, to prescribe what should be done. This might be expected in studies set up to be evaluatory, but in general in social scientific research, this is not recommended. It too often sounds as if the target group is inferior, or failing, and the researcher is superior, magisterial and in possession of some all-wise knowledge. Thus, for example, it is out of place for researchers to tell teachers what they should do on the basis of research they have done at their school. This is not simply a matter of etiquette—more often than not researchers are not in possession of all the knowledge required to make practical decisions within any one location. They can make *suggestions,* which apart from anything else might stand more chance of being taken up.

Some examples:

> It would appear that this was an opportunity lost by the teachers to provide relevant cultural and linguistic support in the classrooms.

This observation came after a point about bilingual support staff not being asked to work with children in their mother tongue. It could be put more positively in the form of a suggestion, perhaps in the conclusion.

> There are also black dolls for the children to play with, though often black dolls have European features, therefore there is a need to seek out dolls who truly reflect black or Asian cultures.

The last sentence about 'need' is redundant, and demeans teachers—they do not need it spelled out in such a way. Again, it could be rephrased as a suggestion, and used later in a summary.

> In this way there was not a clear understanding of the educational benefits of play within the unit.
>
> In this way particular aspects of the ways in which children's thinking changed in relation to these activities were not recognised.
>
> Aspects of children's development remained unrecognised or misunderstood by the educator.

These examples are in the first instance an empirical matter. Is there evidence to support them? Even if there is, it is unlikely to warrant such sweeping conclusions. Then it has to be asked, even if warranted, if this is the best way of making the point.

Voices in the text

All of these examples so far, while consisting of more than one 'layer', are still all coming from the same direction, i.e. the voice of the author. In early realist tales this was a disembodied voice. Indeed, at times it was as if there were no human author there, but some supernormal being. Charmaz and Mitchell (1997: 193) talk of the 'myth of silent authorship'. Thomas (1992:10) refers to the 'frozen text', where all the dynamism between researcher and others in the course of data collection is lost in the written account. It is the 'style of no style, windowpane prose' (Golden-Biddle and Locke 1997:75). However, after the first wave of ethnographic studies in the UK in the 1970s, it was perhaps a natural development for researchers to become more reflexive about their work and tell 'confessional' in contrast to 'realist' tales (see for example the collection in Burgess 1984). Soon, ethnographic authors began to write themselves into the text. An early example of this is Davies (1982). She writes:

> C.Wright Mills (1959) declares that the authors of the best social science present themselves as people rather than as depersonalised automatons whose heavy style depends on some reified knowledge of 'how it is done'…. My reasons for presenting myself as 'I' rather than as 'the author' stem not just from a stylistic preference, but from a recognition of the fact that the pragmatic nature of this study necessarily involves me as a person. To present the data as if I had not been involved would be to tell only part of the story.

It has now become the custom rather than the exception for qualitative researchers to include some autobiographical details, in recognition that their 'selves'—their personal histories, beliefs and values—are all bound up in the study in some way and that the account is not a purely objective one that any competent researcher employing the same methods with the same degree of rigour would produce, but a construction by this particular one. Readers, therefore, need to know something about the author to aid them in their own construction of the text. It is also now much more the custom in qualitative work to use the active rather than the passive voice in recognition of the author's close engagement with rather than detachment from the research. Sherman (1993:236) further argues that 'received views' are usually framed in an 'official style' based on the passive voice, so that the active voice, as indeed qualitative research in general, acts as a defence against such views.

Others are exploring their own voices in writing in even more depth. Richardson (1994a:523) says her purpose is not to turn sociologists into poets and dramatists, but to 'encourage individuals to accept and nurture their own voices'. She claims that the researcher's self-knowledge improves through experimental writing. Reviewing one's own past work is another method to this end. Diamond, a teacher, educator and researcher, for example (1993), tries to reclaim his own self by revisiting one of his published papers, and wonders why it was written quite as it was. There was certainly an over-dominant professorial voice, he concludes. The introduction and the conclusion are a 'little too hortatory…. Some of the expressions and the appropriations in the paper seem a little too strident…the use of 33 citations shows an over-reliance on the voices of others'. He recognises that he has a number of voices, and is 'sorting out which of my voices is the overbearing, silencing one and when my other more tentative voices need to be heard. My third person voice needs to express itself less as a censor and more as a collaborator'.

There are other voices in the text besides that—or those—of the author. But how to represent the Voice of the other' is a considerable issue. In the conventional text such as might emerge from Chapter 2, the researcher is faced with masses of data, much of which consists of transcripted interviews or discussion. How do you derive maximum benefit from the data in the limited space available? The first task, inevitably, is one of selection, directed by the categorisation or typology generated, and by the relevance and quality of the talk.

There are other choices you then have to make. Do you illustrate a point by one lengthy detailed statement, or by smaller extracts from several, or by some combination from the two? I always like to demonstrate the breadth of support for a point and its nature, while including somewhere a lengthier statement if one of quality exists. Then how do you choose the extracts? The simplest answer, again, is by quality, by the telling point, a particularly articulate or expressive section, a striking metaphor. Pressure of space might force you to pare these down to bare essences. You may even have to use precis, paraphrase or reported speech. These techniques allow you to include more and more of the data, but, of course, with each stage you move further from the voice of the other and more towards your own. All we can say is that as far as is possible, the final product should be fair, rigorous, and keep faith with the original meanings.

We have experimented, in a limited way, with different modes of representing the voices of others. We have one such example from the 'school inspection' research (Jeffrey and Woods 1998). The research showed that these inspections induce profound emotions among teachers, for their whole identities are at stake. They are, in a real sense, 'laid bare' by this process, for the whole of their teaching, and of their selves within the school, is open to the gaze of the inspectors. The teachers' disturbed emotions stand in stark contrast to what they perceived to be the strictly institutionalised, almost dehumanised role adopted by the inspectors. One of the teachers was particularly articulate and emotional following her school inspection. She spoke at considerable length and with feeling. How were we to present her account, given restrictions on space? We tried three variations.

Variation 1

In presenting a paper on the research at a conference, we played part of the tape on which we had recorded the teacher so that the audience could hear her in her own voice, with all its sense of distress and urgency as the words came tumbling out in a spontaneous stream-of-consciousness utterance. Her talk had the emphases, inflections, pauses and intonation that she had given it and which would have been difficult to represent in any other way. The tape was a typical ethnographic product, the result of a chance encounter in the school playground, with the researcher using his pocket recorder. However, while the recording was fine for word capture, its quality was poor for replaying to a large audience. The machine on which the tape was replayed was also inadequate for the task. Much of the point was lost in the big hall where we were giving our presentation. The moral is clear if one opts for this method—potentially a powerful one with the conference aids now available.

Variation 2

We wanted to include this teacher's statement in a book that was bringing together a number of different projects. Restrictions on space were even more pronounced than if we were producing a monograph on school inspections. We had to select, therefore, but we felt we had captured the gist:

> I feel I should be just glad it's all over but instead there's this kind of anticlimax really, a non event almost. It came and went so quickly that I'm thinking, 'I've spent a year getting ready for this, this momentous occasion that's going to totally take over my life', and it's come and it's gone and we've heard, 'Yes, it was very good', and that's it. I keep thinking, 'Yes, all right, it's over and whoopee!' But there's no sense of joy, there's no sense of achievement. There's no sense saying 'Wow! I've gained something from this'…. It's been a nothing. It's been an unreal week, like a surrealist painting or walking into something that isn't quite real, and at the end of it you can't remember what was real. I was there but it wasn't real anyway so how do I hold on to it? What do I hold on to? You don't come away holding on to anything. It's like seeing those surrealist paintings and you get your mind right into it but there's nothing to hold on to. I just can't get over it. I keep thinking. I keep waiting to feel something, in fact I'm *dying* to feel something. It seems to be OK to function for a week, to prove God knows what in this unreal world, but now we're back in the real world. It's as if we are saying that the premise (with) which we do everything in the real world is wrong anyway because it wasn't the real world. Last week wasn't the real world. Up until the previous Friday this was the real world, this was our reality. In fact what they've done is mess with our world. It's exactly what I'm saying about a surreal painting. They've messed with our reality and maybe in trying to step back into our reality we're horrified that it can be shaken so easily. It's horrible because I don't like feeling nothing, I like to feel something. I should feel something.
>
> (Woods *et al* 1997:130)

You don't have to ask if the teacher really experienced this—she would not be able to articulate it in this way if she had not. It is, however, an edited version of what she actually said—an intermittent stream of consciousness—in that hesitations and a section in the middle have been removed, it has been punctuated, and it is selected from a much longer statement. Also not apparent is the breathlessness, urgency and intensity behind the statement. Otherwise it keeps faith with the original.

Variation 3

In presentations at later conferences and seminars I experimented with a different formulation, shorter, but drawing from the entire original:

Ofsted Blues

Anti-climax, non-event.
Whoopee! It's over,
But no sense of joy
Or of achievement.
Who did we do this for,
All this hard work?
It's about them validating
What they have done to a particular system,
But I don't subscribe to this one we had…
Are we going to get any extra money?
An unreal week
Like a surrealist painting.
How do I hold on to it?
When will I *feel* something?
The event turned everything upside down
That you'd ever done before.
No one asked to look at a sodding record,
So how do they know what we do?
They haven't told me anything I didn't know.
They didn't need to take a week.
It's frightening that you go along,
Instead of saying 'Stuff you and your bloody timetable!'
I want to get back to *feeling.*
Look! We're all going early today.
Bye, Selina! Are you coming in tomorrow?

The reasoning here is that it uses the teachers' own words, but aims to present the essence of her response, picking out the startling expressions, cutting out all the rest, and through the stark contrasts and juxtapositions, to highlight the cruel ironies in the situation. It tries to do this with a mind to content, feeling, cadence, rhythm, contrast and context. Each line contains a subject that could give rise to considerable discussion. Like Richardson (1993: 696) my aim was to create a Vivid, immediate, emotional experience for the reader' and to 'integrate the sociological and the poetic at the professional, political and personal levels'. I see the piece as an addition to, rather than a replacement of more traditional analysis. It offers another dimension. In the monograph that was eventually produced, the interview on which the poem is based was analysed with others for

common themes and categories, as recommended in Chapter 2 above. Some of these are starkly revealed in the poem, for example:

- The feeling of anomie and a curious 'no feeling' induced by the dehumanisation and sense of uselessness
- Power and control—who for, and how accomplished
- The question of values—those of the inspectors are not the only ones and the speaker does not subscribe to them
- 'Strategic compliance', and how the speaker feels about it ('frightening'—another commentary on power)
- And, at the end, an attempt to draw a line under the week with an early departure, and perhaps a note of recovering the old routines on the morrow
- The predominant theme is the experience of anomie and of normlessness, which, once grasped by the reader, can be used to apply to the understanding of other situations (see Hewitt 1994:207)

'Ofsted Blues' will not make the 20th century book of verse, but I found it a useful way of getting these points over on an overhead projector during presentations, and emphasising the prominent features of the experience encapsulated all in one display. In neither case would it have been possible to present Shula's original unedited utterance, which ran to several pages. The constraint here is not just one of the publisher's restrictions on wordcount, though that is a serious consideration; but also one of judging how best to get the teacher's feelings over to readers or audience. I make no claim to one presentational form being superior to the others. They are shaped for different situations and different audiences.

Some feel that none of these methods of presentation are adequate. Lather (1991) for example, refers to the 'textual staging of knowledge'. She wishes to give the voices of the researched more say in the finished product, and is critical of the rhetorical device ethnographers often use of presenting quotes in the final product, possibly out of context and their original frame of meaning, to suit their own framework. If this were the case, it would of course be reprehensible. Theory should fit the data, not vice-versa. Respondent validation might help—those who have spoken in the text being given drafts not only of transcripts but also of draft papers, which show how the transcripts are being used. But it might be argued that this is only a correctional voice, not a proactive one. It can only comment on the constructions the author has made; it cannot make constructions of its own.

There are devices that one can use to maximise the voice of the other. Lather (1997) herself gives one example with the book produced from her work with women living with HIV/AIDS. She and her coauthor had produced an earlier desktop version 'in order to get feedback from the 25 women we had interviewed and to solicit publishers toward what the women call a "K-Mart book", widely

available to women like themselves, their families and friends as well as a more general audience' *(286).* Here she describes the structure of the later book:

> Aimed at a popular audience, *Troubling the Angels* traces the patterns and changes of how the women make sense of HIV/AIDS in their lives. The book begins with two prefaces, the first introducing the book and the second the women, many of whom have written their own introductions. The heart of the book consists of a series of short chapters that narrate the interview data around topics on the day-to-day realities of living with the disease, relationships, efforts to make sense of the disease in their lives, death and dying issues, and the role of support groups. The titles were chosen from the words of the women themselves…. In sidebars, references are made to such things as further resources for dealing with HIV/AIDS in the deaf community, information on gynecological signs of HIV infection in women, and the demographics of AIDS as a global crisis, with references for those who want further information. Interspersed with these short data chapters are…texts and illustrations…[that] function both as 'breathers' between the themes and emotions of the women's stories and as shifts from the women's testimony to short engagements with history, poetry, and sociology around AIDS issues. Running across the bottom is a subtext commentary where Chris and I, as co-researchers, spin out our tales of doing the research. This subtext provides the background for the study and researcher efforts to make sense of the 'data' and the study and the larger context in which the AIDS crisis is such a cultural marker. Scattered throughout the book are some of the women's own writings in the form of poems, letters, speeches, and e mails. Finally, the book concludes with an epilogue that updates the reader on each of the women and the support groups and includes their reactions to the desktop published version of the book.
>
> (287–8)

This is a kind of 'messy text', designed to counter the 'comfort text' producing the 'romance of knowledge as cure', the authors hoping that 'the very fragmentation of the book, its detours and delays, will unsettle readers into a sort of stammering knowing about the work of living with HIV/AIDS, a knowing not so sure of itself (288).

Also, the written is not the spoken word—hence the interest of some in 'performance texts'. One student teacher who was encouraged by her supervisor to record on tape aspects of her own development was disturbed when she saw the transcript, since it had 'lost the dynamics of the spoken word, such as variations in speed, rhythms, stress and accents' (Thomas 1995:xii). 'However', Thomas *(ibid.)* notes, 'the text did represent her views'.

The reader also has a voice. A problematic form of this is well illustrated by the case of the so-called Three wise men's report' (Alexander *et al.* 1992).

This was a major government initiative, instigated at a time of great concern about educational standards and national performance in the global economy, heralded by the media, and leading to heated debate among academics and teachers. There were widely differing interpretations of this paper, which were products partly of differing interests and partly of the different contexts and phases the paper went through. Some saw it as a discussion paper, some a definitive report, some an academic paper, and they reacted accordingly. Those who saw it as the latter attacked it for not observing the canons of academic presentation. Those who saw it as a report thought it should form the basis of the specification for the details of curriculum organisation and classroom management, which would guide the inspection of school performance. A 'discussion paper', however, would leave teachers with rather more latitude. The last two were not unconnected with political attitudes. In fact, political and educational interests were inextricably involved, and feelings were fomented by the discourse of derision mounted by the national press, which whipped up a moral panic about 'declining' educational standards and 'progressive' teaching methods. The case is instructive in how different groups use different discourses to imbue sense to, rather than take sense from, written texts. Just as the writer constructs an account, the reader constructs a reading (see Woods and Wenham 1995, for the full analysis). The moral is for authors to make every effort to say what *they* mean as clearly and as fully as possible, perhaps anticipating and heading off some of the alternatives. Richardson (1990:52–3) avers, 'You cannot finally control how readers will respond to your work, but you can use literary devices to up the odds in favour of others understanding your point of view—that is of responding to what you *intend* to communicate'.

The reader's voice can be targeted more positively. Wilson (1998:173), following Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1993), comments on the distinction between 'readerly' and 'writerly' texts. The former

> Lead the reader logically, predictably, often in a linear fashion, through the research process, leaving little space for the reader to make his or her own textual connections between the stories and images presented.… The writerly text is less predictable. It calls on the reader to engage with the text to more deliberately bring to the reading his or her experiences as a way of filling…the gaps in the text.

As the writer constructs a text, so the reader constructs a reading. Wilson invites readers of her article to do just that, providing a linear development, but interspersing it with other data, and with responses to the article by a partner in the research who does not always agree with what she is saying. Similarly, Winter (1989), talking about 'action research', which is designed to inform practice, says that 'readers will expect a report to be sufficiently organised to be accessible to a conventional act of reading, as well as sufficiently open to allow for readers' various interpretations' (64). Elsewhere (Winter 1988:238) he

talks of the 'creative reader', whose 'critical response is more than an imaginative play with the text; it is, as it were, also a reformulation of the self. In some respects, the 'authority of the text (shifts) from the writer toward a co-authoring of the reader with the writer' (Peterat and Smith 1996:17).

Louden (1991:xvi) takes this argument a stage further, for 'understanding is in principle incomplete and continues to grow with each interpreter's encounter with new texts or experience'. Like Wilson's, his text has to be open to further interpretation, so he deals with the case-study evidence in large sections/stories, ensures that where quotations from transcript are used elsewhere full context is available, and separates stories from analysis by rows of asterisks. Thus 'rather than resisting alternative interpretations, which studies constructed from brief and decontextualised quotations do, this study attempts to remain open to further interpretation' (ibid.).

Such readings have transformational properties. As Sparkes (1994:178) notes,

> Stories can provide powerful insights into the lived experiences of others in ways that can inform, awaken, and disturb readers by illustrating their involvement in social processes about which they might not be consciously aware. Once aware, individuals may find the consequences of their involvement unacceptable and seek to change the situation. In such circumstances, the potential for individual and collective restorying is enhanced.

In this way, voices are not just armchair articulations—they become empowered.

Chapter 4
Style

> It is because of his transformative way with language, his mixture of wordplay and merciless humour, that Beckett the writer has life and has it more abundantly than the conditions endured by Beckett the citizen might seem to warrant.
>
> (Heaney 1995:159)

I have already touched on *how* we say things in considering different forms of writing. I wish to enlarge on it in this chapter. This is not just a matter of clarity and conciseness—the main ingredients of the traditional approach discussed in Chapter 2. We might wish to convey a sense of atmosphere, ethos, mood or tone. We might want to represent feelings and emotions, to re-create people's experiences, to transport the reader to a scene in order to deepen understanding. We might want to explore some of our own innermost thoughts and feelings, in a communication with the self that promises to cast light on some general aspect of human experience. This is less a matter of categories and themes (though these might still be helpful) and more one of expression. Some, such as free-flow or stream-of-consciousness writing, may be the exact structural opposite of those discussed in Chapter 2. How do you do these things? What forms and figures of speech are used? What textual strategies are there available? How are they used in academic writing? And how can we ensure their quality?

Rhetoric

Ethnographies have traditionally been constructed using a number of rhetorical devices, the intention of which is to persuade the reader of the point of view being advanced by the author (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Atkinson 1990). Fine and Martin (1995) for example, show how effectively Erving Goffman uses humour—specifically sarcasm, satire and irony—in his classic work *Asylums* (1961). This seems quite a long way from the kind of objective realist tale that would be likely to be the product of Chapter 2. But in effect, the two can be and often are used in conjunction. We can use a number of rhetorical devices within a scientific framework, which in many instances would make for a stronger

account. But there are a number of dubious uses. Among those commonly employed are:

- Use of words and phrases subtly designed to persuade without appearing to, and without evidential support, as in the insertion of frequency or numerical terms such as 'most', 'often', 'seldom' and 'as is commonly recognised'.
- Misuse of jargon. We may fall into this in straining to show some theoretical richness in our work. Specialist language is often required, but this sometimes runs to excess, becomes pretentious and opaque. The satirical magazine *Private Eye* runs a column called 'Pseuds' corner'. Sociologists frequently feature in this.
- Misuse of references. Citations give an article the ring of academic credibility. Where used appropriately, of course, they are necessary, linking the article to other sources of related knowledge. But they may be peppered about indiscriminately, a technique Bassey (1995:77) describes as 'sandbagging'—'adding to a statement inert defences to make it look secure'. Or they may be partially (though not entirely, nor even mainly) relevant to a point. For example, in A.Hargreaves' (1988) article, he claims that 'As Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985) have found in their life history interviews with secondary teachers, many teachers regard examinations not as a constraint but as a resource for motivating pupils' (Hargreaves 1988:63). In fact, Sikes *et al* had a sample of only forty teachers drawn from science and art departments in two geographical areas. 'Some' teachers would have been a more accurate description. Citations may also be used to indicate a taken-for-granted point, 'what everybody knows', but which still has to be argued for within the context, as with labelling' (Becker 1963) or 'scaffolding' (Bruner 1985) or 'triangulation' (Denzin 1970). Some of these terms become hackneyed through overuse, and one wonders if their meaning becomes warped as they are passed from one text to another with no actual engagement, rather as in the game of Chinese whispers. In a similar way, 'genuflection' involves 'ritualistic citing of the founding parents of theory' (Bassey 1995:77).
- Misuse of quotations. Quotations enrich a text, but not if they are too lengthy, inappropriate or numerous, or used out of context. By the last point, I mean quoting a piece by, say, lifting a phrase out of a section of text, which by being placed in your text has a different connotation. I was surprised on one occasion to receive a catalogue from a publisher which included in support of one of the books advertised part of a sentence from a review I had written which had been almost entirely critical. Quotations are usually employed because they make a point in a unique and particularly telling way; they blend in with the text; they add support and interest.
- Misuse of acknowledgements and blurbs. Naturally people wish to thank those who have helped them, but sometimes long lists of these are presented containing a number of highly respected people who may have only had marginal or no association with the construction of the text. Despite the

author's claim of full responsibility for the manuscript, those cited nonetheless lend their authority to the text. Ben-Ari (1995:135–6) argues 'acknowledgements…may be devised to do a whole range of things like show, report, camouflage, hide, command, beg, maintain, reason, qualify or inform about a certain order or state'. Wolcott (1990:72–3) recommends keeping note of those who have assisted, which resolves the problem of overload, and also the equivalent crime of leaving out people who have lent support in significant ways.

- Loaded choice of pseudonyms. Pseudonyms are essential to protect identities, but sometimes the choice carries connotations. 'Mr Megaphone', for example, is one of the teachers in Beynon's (1985) study. The tutors in Riseborough's (1992) ethnography of catering and hotel management students are given names like 'Mrs Hygiene', 'Mrs Metropole', 'Miss Motel', 'Mr Pastry', 'Mrs Silver-Service' and 'Mr Fivestar', while the students are all given proper pseudonyms like 'Ben' and 'Anne'. These are no doubt selected to symbolise the authors' views of the persons involved, but they are loaded views. Mr Megaphone could be regarded as hyperbole—exaggeration for the sake of emphasis or humour. Riseborough's similarly are humorous, but might be seen as demeaning the tutors while upholding the students' rights to be considered more human (see Delamont 1992:177–81, for a useful discussion of this issue).
- Use of subtle, unacknowledged and unsubstantiated rhetorical devices such as metaphor, simile, synechdoche, metonymy and irony. These are essential tools of the writer's trade, but they need to be recognised and acknowledged, not used subversively. See Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 245–53) for a brief account of these textual strategies, and Atkinson (1990) for a longer one.

Spins

This is where the author, commonly through use of rhetoric, puts a particular, loaded construction on a text. Common forms of spin are:

- Constructing a 'straw person'. There is a strong temptation to work on a principle of contrasts, Thus, in an attempt to highlight one's own argument and increase its purity and force, one may construct an apology of an opposing one that does not really exist. It is a kind of bastardised ideal type, drawing on the perceived evils of certain positions and gluing them to gether into a Frankenstein's monster of a case. The straw person typically draws on the work of a number of people and in itself is recognisable as nobody. A similar form of misrepresentation is to seize on only those points within one person's position that serve the present purpose, ignoring their context which may well modify those points. This is error enough in itself, but the major sin is inadequately contextualising one's own work within the field. Of course, people who disagree with the representation of their position and one's

analysis also, on occasions, shout 'Foul! Straw person!' when it is real flesh and blood.

- Over-claiming. This often accompanies a straw person. One gets carried away by excitement and enthusiasm as ideas emerge, and in attempting to make the most of the argument in the strongest terms, overstates the case. It is often only when the product is seen in print that this is recognised. The initial exuberance has faded, and a more rational evaluation can take place. There are pressures on us to over-claim which we need to recognise and resist. It has often been remarked that only positive research gets reported. We need to make our research tell and count. We are therefore looking for opportunities to 'excel'.
- Under-claiming. This derives from an unwarranted modesty or failure to perceive possibilities. The report may be written 'down' in an inconsequential way, set in a rather lugubrious context with the disadvantages of the method stressed over the advantages, and the weaknesses rather than strengths stressed in conclusion. By oversight, there may be missed opportunities, unspotted connections and relevance. Here especially one stands to gain from the comments of others.
- Utopianism. This is an imaginary state of ideal perfection. It is not necessarily a fault if recognised for what it is. At times, however, Utopian suggestions are put forward as practical possibilities. The research then becomes predicated on an otherworldly base and loses credibility. As in the case of the straw person, however, there might be arguments as to what is Utopian and what is not. A form of Utopianism leads, on occasion, to mysticism. Unwilling to commit thoughts to the impurity of the printed page, we may cloak them in obscurity and advance them as an 'ongoing exploration of minds'. Unfortunately it is a journey without end, on which we are likely to be lone travellers. As C Wright Mills (1959:243) notes, 'the line between profundity and verbiage is often delicate, even perilous'.
- Sloppiness. This is too-casual writing, showing inadequate thought during analysis and planning. There might be wild claims without proper evidence, ambiguities, inconsistencies, non-sequiturs, contradictions. Many of these can be ironed out in later drafts, but if the general structure has not been adequately conceptualised, there is no alternative but to start again.
- Over-zealousness. I argued in Chapter 1 for a productive tension between planning and freedom. Too much of the latter leads to sloppiness; too much of the former to over-zealousness. The ideal situation is where the free-ranging mind can produce ideas that are then subjected to methodological rigour. It is difficult to work the process the other way round. Too much concern with the proprieties of method and *le mot juste* at this early stage can lead to a barren product. It is like batting immaculately for a whole session yet scoring no runs, or rigorously scrubbing some clothes—the product ends up scrupulously clean but threadbare. Ideas must be allowed space and time to germinate.

They will quickly rot if they are no good, but they will certainly never take root if not sown and cultivated.

- Over-exactness. This is too neat an account. There is pressure on us—from research sponsors, publishers and the academic world at large—to be meticulously tidy, to present our work in ordered packages, duly itemised, sectionalised and sequenced. However, as we have seen, qualitative data does not always lend itself to neatness. The problem is how to convey the sense of flux, process, messiness, inconsistency and ambiguity, which is the very essence of everyday life. This is difficult to do whilst also trying to derive some theoretical order from the material. It is easy to slip into a previous, inappropriate, presentational framework, and make categories and types too sharp and distinct, and the account rather too foursquare. The greatest danger of this comes when seeking to use earlier models or theoretical constructions. An extreme example of this I saw recently involved a 4×4 matrix where the author had felt pressured to produce a type for every square. The result was to make a nonsense of the matrix, for most of the types could have gone anywhere.

Metaphor

> And, Sir, as to metaphorical expression, that is a great excellence in style, when it is used with propriety, for it gives you two ideas for one; conveys the meaning more luminously, and generally with a perception of delight.
>
> (Samuel Johnson, quoted in Lucas 1974:218)

Despite the warnings above, rhetoric is an essential part of ethnographic writing. Authors have to be skilled in and conscious of its use. Let us consider some examples of the most widely used figure of speech—metaphor, 'the life of style' (Lucas 1974:76).

Metaphors figure prominently in our work. We have been concerned recently to portray the *art* of teaching, and one way to do this is to draw on other artistic pursuits. In this way Bob Jeffrey, a keen opera goer, drew on music to assist his depiction of how teachers create different atmospheres and use different tones in their classrooms (Woods and Jefftey 1996). Thus in andante passages,

> quietness creeps over a group, where a teacher is trying to bring a class to order. Members of the group sensitive to the 'creeping quietness' encourage others to conform; the varied use of stares and mock gestures of disapproval tinged with occasional humour establishes a settled mood among the class.
>
> (Ibid.:82)

'Legato' had a steady rhythm, while 'spiritoso' involved 'animation, vigour and liveliness, generating a mood of excitement, joy, interest and enthusiasm' (86). One of the attractions of these as analogies is that while they provide strong contrasts, they can be 'orchestrated' within a single lesson. Indeed, how the teacher does this is another indication of her skill. Bob finds the whole world of opera and ballet an inspiration to the understanding of social life (see Jeffrey 1997). He illustrates this beautifully in his account of how his viewing of *Swan Lake* at the end of a week in which he had been observing the effects of a school inspection on the teachers aided his understanding of those effects (see Woods 1996: chapter 4).

There is a prominent metaphor in Chapter 1 of this book, where the task of writing is compared to my old Morris 1000. Apart from the power to highlight certain features of the writing process, the metaphor has two other unstated characteristics that I hope would come through to the reader. One is my fondness for the car in spite of (or perhaps because of) its idiosyncrasies: in the same peculiar way I am fond of the activity of writing. The other is an element of humour that I think we need to leaven the vicissitudes typically experienced. As with most of these constructions, the test of their achievement lies with the reader.

Official policy in recent years has been less impressed with the art of teaching and more enthused by its mechanics. Cars have become a popular choice for analogy for a different reason from that which motivated me above. In *Testing Teachers* Bob Jeffrey and I (1998) compare school inspections to Ministry of Transport (MOT) tests on cars, prompted by a headteacher's comment:

> It's a bit like an MOT test on a car. It tells you the state of the vehicle today, but can't take any account of the fact that it was a complete wreck last week, and that you've got plans to make it even better the week after next.
>
> (*Observer,* 19 June 1994)

We wrote:

> An Ofsted inspection has similarities with an MOT in other ways. The mechanic has a plan of the car and is generally able to apply the plan to all cars. The mechanic examines a set of components for functionality and evaluates it in terms of good or satisfactory working order, and failure. The mechanic marks certain components as failing and then leaves the car owner with the responsibility of bringing the component up to standard or to replace it. However a curriculum cannot be so compartmentalised argues Nina from Trafflon,
>
> The curriculum to my mind cannot be 'delivered'. Notionally it can be delivered but in reality it can't. If somebody says to me: '36 hours

> to implement the RE curriculum, an hour a week', I suppose I can do it, but when you bring it down to reality, no I can't do it.
>
> The reality of the teaching and learning context is changed. Just as a car has a number of unconnected components, so does the focus of an Ofsted inspection. However, there is very little that is unrelated in a primary school or classroom. Assemblies often relate to individual achievement and appropriate learning behaviours, the form of questioning in a classroom relates to the teacher's particular programme for each child, the depth of record keeping on each child relates to the child's particular needs and the atmospheres that are created relate to different teaching and learning situations (Woods and Jeffrey 1996).
>
> How dare they come in and judge on one PE lesson, one Science lesson, one this, one that—almost like going into Woolworths and, you know, Pic and Mix and have you got a full kilo at the end of it?
>
> (Alison)
>
> A car does not have feelings, aspirations or the capacity to make hundreds of qualitative judgements every day. Nor is it able to work morally in terms of justice, and other values. It is not in Aristotle's terms a 'virtuous being'. For teachers, it is this complexity—more representative of a living organism than a car—that Ofsted inspections are unable to grasp.
>
> (Jeffrey and Woods 1998:62–3)

Warfare provides a rich vein for metaphorical description in this book, much of it provided by the teachers. Such a note epitomises the sharply conflictual nature of the encounter between teachers and inspectors, while providing rich illustrative material in the various activities connected with it. One head-teacher told how the Chair of Governors appeared in the school at 8.10 on the first morning of inspection and visited every classroom to wish all the teachers good luck: 'It was like inspecting the troops before the battle, like Monty did, to show how the general cared about them' (*ibid.:*15). Just before leaving the staffroom for their classrooms, the head rallied the troops with 'Once more into the breach, dear friends!' (17). At one point, the head, checking on all kinds of trivial matters, says, 'I'm acting like the Gestapo!' One of their main coping strategies is humour, but much of it is 'Battle of Britain humour' (148). The day before the inspection was like 'the Alamo, the night before the attack with people all in their own rooms writing letters home' (149).

One entire chapter is an extended metaphor based on the idea of 'colonisation'. This seemed to us to bring out the 'power' and 'control' dimensions in vividly appropriate ways. It describes how the inspection 'colonised' every aspect of their working and non-working lives, and their physical and moral selves. It concludes:

> Colonization is a form of control in which many of those who are colonized accommodate the new process and the language and so the colonization creeps steadily into daily routines supported by a higher degree of school corporateness. However, colonial history shows that colonization is never total and the experience of living a colonized life actually ensures reactions against the colonizers and adaptation of the colonizing discourse. Nevertheless, primary teachers have been severely affected by this process.
>
> (*ibid.*:107)

Here, the metaphor runs ahead of the data, prefiguring a chapter on 'coping strategies'—which duly came, otherwise the point would have been taking the metaphor too far except in a very speculative sense.

The intensity of the experience caused teachers to wax lyrical. Victor saw it like a marathon (which he runs regularly):

> We're not at our peak during an inspection, nowhere near it, you know, it's like the last 3 or 4 miles of a marathon. You can't shout at the crowd, you can't talk to anyone, you can't do anything except go for that singleminded thing you have to do. You are not at the point where you're 5 miles down the road where you're having chats and making jokes with people. It's just the same sort of feeling, 'I can't deal with it, I've got to deal with it, don't ask me this, don't ask me that'. I think everybody's feeling that. Nobody is at their best, we're limping home.
>
> (*ibid.*:124)

The teachers' descriptions make their experience more vivid, real and telling than any straightforward account would have done. The latter would simply record the facts of the matter. The metaphor conveys the feelings involved, gives the experience a first-hand immediacy, carries the reader into the action, gives us a kind of 'double vision' (Brown 1976:175). You are running that marathon with Victor. It stimulates memories of similar events in your own life when total concentration on a single goal has sidelined all other issues, and you have felt yourself flagging in the later stages but forced yourself to go on. There is an interesting kind of triangulation here—between the objective facts, the teachers' expressed experience of them, and the readers' own felt experiences.

What makes a good metaphor? It should help to clarify and to illuminate. It provides interest and variety, and can startle the reader into recognition by its unfamiliarity. It should add to the base description rather than just replicating it, for example by intimating how someone felt, or by making sharp contrasts. It should not exaggerate, mislead, or run away with itself into literary excess. When an extended metaphor threatens to take over the description and facts are being modified, however slightly, to accommodate it, then it is time to reconsider its appropriateness. Also, within any one event or experience, where a series of

metaphors are employed, they should have a consistency, as in the conflictual theme above. These help to integrate the experience—as a single good metaphor might do (MOT Test?). Multiple functions should be recognised; for example, some of those above might be regarded as coping strategies, creating humour by making surprising analogies. Consider Grace's depiction of an inspection as like the sex act, 'lots of activity and noise and afterwards we're not fit to do anything else'. This does not really tell us much more about an inspection, and it is difficult to see what else the two activities have in common, so it is not a good metaphor from the explanatory point of view. But it is a witty remark and is probably better seen as an example of coping through humour.

Metaphor is a powerful weapon with a hairline trigger. It can go off accidentally or backfire. It can make a loud noise to no effect. But if skilfully used, it can hit the mark.

Expressive writing

From time to time, we might wish to employ a number of rhetorical devices to create atmosphere and convey feelings. Consider the following examples:

Harry Wolcott, 'Adequate schools and inadequate education: the life history of a sneaky kid' (1994:73)

> Brad needed to cook. An open fire is slow and quite impractical on a rainy day. One needs a camp stove in order to cook inside a cabin. And fuel. And then a better stove. Cold water is all right for washing hands but it can be a bit too bracing for washing one's hair or torso, especially when outside with the wind blowing. One needs a bigger pan to heat water for bathing. Soap and shampoo. A towel. A new razor. A mirror. A bigger mirror. Foam rubber mattress. A chair. A chaise longue.
>
> One needs something to look at and listen to. Magazines are a brief diversion, but rock music is essential. One needs a radio. Flashlight batteries are expensive for continual radio listening; a radio operated by an automobile battery would be a better source—and could power a better radio. An automobile battery needs to be recharged. Carrying a battery to town is awkward, and constantly having to pay for battery charges is expensive. As well as access to a power supply (in my carport), one needs a battery charger. No, this one is rated too low; a bigger one is needed.… Cigarettes (or tobacco), matches, eggs, bread, Tang, Crisco, pancake, flour, syrup—supplies get low. An occasional steak helps vary the austere diet.
>
> One needs transportation. A bicycle is essential, as are spare parts to keep it in repair. Now a minor accident: the bicycle is wrecked.

> No money to buy a new one. Brad 'hypes' himself up and sets out to find a replacement. Buy one? 'When they're so easy to get? No way'.

This is from Harry Wolcott's article mentioned in Chapter 2, and is from a section entitled 'The cultural context of a free spirit'. While Brad claimed to be a 'free spirit' and could largely do without society, he was a product of his society. 'What he had learned to want was a function of his culture, and he drew narrowly and rather predictably from the cultural repertoire of the very society from which he believed he was extricating himself *(ibid.)*. Wolcott could have illustrated this more straightforwardly. Instead, he chooses a style which puts the reader in Brad's place, highlights the way in which one's needs escalate in a consumer society, how one dependency inescapably and rapidly leads to another, and how, if Brad is indeed living on the margins of society, it is still on the side within its orbit. These points are more effectively made here than they would be by any 'straight' writing.

Frank McCourt, Angela's Ashes (1996:1–2)

> Out in the Atlantic Ocean great sheets of rain gathered to drift slowly up the River Shannon and settle forever in Limerick. The rain dampened the city from the feast of the circumcision to New Year's Eve. It created a cacophony of hacking coughs, bronchial rattles, asthmatic wheezes, consumptive croaks. It turned noses into fountains, lungs into bacterial sponges. It provoked curses galore; to ease the catarrh you boiled onions in milk blackened with pepper, for the congested passages you made a paste of boiled flour and nettles, wrapped it in a rag, and slapped it, sizzling, on the chest.
>
> From October to April the walls of Limerick glistened with the damp. Clothes never dried; tweed and woollen coats housed living things, sometimes sprouted mysterious vegetations. In pubs, steam rose from damp bodies and garments to be inhaled with cigarette and pipe smoke laced with the stale fumes of spilled stout and whiskey and tinged with the odour of piss wafting in from the outdoor jakes where many a man puked up his week's wages.
>
> The rain drove us into the church—our refuge, our strength, our only dry place. At mass, Benediction, novenas, we huddled in great damp clumps, dozing through priest drone, while steam rose again from our clothes to mingle with the sweetness of incense, flowers and candle.
>
> Limerick gained a reputation for piety, but we knew it was only the rain.

Observe how in a very few words McCourt conjures up the feel and smell of the prevailing condition of his childhood, the wetness and dampness of it, the discomfiture; how very few words bring to mind a whole area of activity (such as 'dozing through priest drone'). Notice the metaphors, the onomatopoeia, the imagery, the rhythm and cadence of the sentences, the pathos, the gentle ironic humour. There is music and poetry here, clever choice of words and sentences, artfully arranged. There is possibly some slight exaggeration in places, but it contributes nonetheless to the general truth, adding to the humour and humanity of the piece. The whole excerpt hangs together to form a satisfying entity in itself—a prose poem.

We might not be able to emulate this quality of writing in our descriptions. In fact some of our attempts might be truly awful. But this is the nature of experimentation. Many attempts might fail before one works and leaves you feeling that it was all worthwhile. The best preparation is extensive reading of expressive literature, together with repeated experimentation, testing out on colleagues and friends, drafting and re-drafting, and jettisoning where necessary.

Carolyn Ellis, 'Maternal connections' (1996:241)

Ellis is tending her sick mother in hospital:

> Being careful of the tubes and IVs, I unsnap and remove her soiled gown. She tries to help. I cover the front of her body with a towel, to protect her from cold. 'It feels good when you wash my back', she says, and I continue rubbing. When she shivers, I run the washcloth under hot water. I wonder about washing the rest of her body.
>
> Around front, I wash her belly, noting the faded scars of my younger brother's cesarean birth—and shudder at the reminder that he is now dead—and I look closely at the new scars of the gall bladder surgery. Her stomach is puffy, but almost flat now, not rounded as before. The extra skin hangs loosely. Then her legs. Although her skin is dry and flaky, I admire her thin, almost bony, yet still shapely, legs. Our bodies have the same form, I note. Long, slender, and graceful limbs, fatty layers on top of the hips and belly, and a short and thick waist.
>
> I move to her breasts, still large and pendulous. Now they hang to her waist and, as her shoulders curve forward, they rest on her belly, like mine, only lower.
>
> I take one tenderly in my hand, lift it gently from her belly to wash it, noting the rash underneath. 'Would you like cream on that?'
>
> 'Oh, yes, it's real sore'. She holds her breast while I rub in the cream.
>
> Feeling no particular emotion, I observe from a distance. Her body is my body, my body in 36 years. So this is what it will look like and be like. I see.

The accompanying note states

> In her work on narrative, subjectivity and illness, Carolyn Ellis seeks to write evocative texts that remind readers of the complexity of their social worlds. Writing autoethnographic texts has intensified her life experience; she hopes they also contribute to the lives of readers.
>
> (243)

She says elsewhere (18) that she 'didn't want to stay stuck at the level of data. I wanted to be a storyteller, someone who used narrative strategies to transport readers into experiences and make them feel as well as think'. In the piece above, use of the present tense heightens the effect, as does the gently modulated description of her mother's body, the intimacy, and the comparisons with self, the connections between mother and daughter. Though she feels 'no particular emotion' at one point, the reader can hardly fail to be moved by this account. Later in the piece, Ellis reflects on relationships and personal identity, and on some new young fathers eager for a sight of their new babies. The combination of description and reflection, the artfully portrayed intimacy, the powerful bond the daughter feels for her mother, her wistful reflections on her own childlessness at a late age, not only helps to convey readers into this private world, but into their own. Denzin (1995:16) writes, 'Understanding is visceral. The fully interpretive text plunges the reader into the interior, feeling, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching worlds of subjective human perception'.

Paul Willis, 'The Triple-X boys' (1982:237)

> Bill-the-Boot, Sammy, Slim Jim and Bob…never wore helmets and goggles. These destroyed the excitement of wind rushing into the face, and the loud exhaust beat thumping the ears. The point of fast driving was the experience, not the fact, of speed…. On a bike high-speed riding is an extremely physical experience. The whole body is thrown backwards. (At the Triple-X club, the boys would often tell one another: 'I was nearly blown off'.) And when even a slight bend is taken at high speed, the machine and the driver need to go over at quite an angle in order to compensate for the centrifugal force. The experienced driver becomes part of the bike and intuitively feels the correct balancing at high speeds…. The equivalent of gale-force wind is tearing into the living flesh. Eyes are forced into a slit and water profusely; the mouth is dragged back into a snarl; and it is extremely difficult to keep the mouth closed. They make no attempt to minimise the drag effect of the wind. Jackets are partly open and are not buttoned down around the throat; belts are not worn; there's nothing to keep the jacket close to the skin; trousers are not tucked

> away in boots and socks; and there is nothing at all to prevent the wind from tunnelling up their sleeves.

Willis was able to provide this close description because he also rode a motorbike, and he experienced all these things. He felt the gale force wind, watery eyes, snarling mouth, heard the thumping of the exhaust, moulded himself to the bike. This 'intimate familiarity' provides him with details that he can convey, such as to transport the reader to the scene and on to the bike. We feel the wind on the face, the tearing at our clothes, the streaming of our hair — and sense the exhilaration of the devil-may-care hurtle through space. Notice how the effect of free-flowing apparel, and an element of the distinctive culture of the group, is heightened by listing as missing accoutrements or arrangements that one might normally expect in their clothing.

Peter Woods, 'Mad Mick Tracey and Kamikaze Les' (1982: 169–70)

> Puffing and steaming, scraping, bumping and rattling, the bangers assemble at the pits' exit in order to carry out hasty repairs for the next race in ten minutes' time.
>
> Ten minutes? But surely, several of these cars will never race again? Wheels pointing in all directions; steering mutilated; chassis distorted; engines grunting, squealing, hissing, leaking; cables trailing; tyres flat, in ribbons, or gone; some cars limping back, others being pushed, others lifted by one of three breakdown lorries— they are surely wrecks now?
>
> But no! In the pits there are scenes of controlled savagery. The drivers that have just bashed each other's cars out of shape on the track now bash their own into a new design in the pits. They free the wheels, straighten the chassis, square bonnets and boots, hack *off* excrescences. There's muck, filth, twisted metal, steam, heat, oil, and the ring of an orchestra of lump hammers knocking cars back into a state of trackworthiness. Here and there an axe, and even one chain saw, take shorter cuts.
>
> Music wafts in from the loudspeakers. Spectators mingle with the drivers. There are programmes, hooters, favours. 'Clockwork Orange Rules, OK?', 'Scouse Power', 'Highway Florida Patrol', 'My Brain Hurts', 'Love', 'Sex', 'Sharon', 'Mother', 'Mafia GB', 'I choked Linda Lovelace'. There are bomber jackets, jeans, overalls that seem made of oil and dirt, summer dresses, dainty high-heeled sandals tripping through the mud. Fathers and young sons.
>
> Frank Wesby's car has been on fire and is out of commission. He spends the rest of the day looking forlorn. Some are all right. Time

for a fag, even perhaps a pork pie or hot dog, eased down by oil off the fingers and a pint. Snatches of conversation. 'You put yer foot down and there's nothing there'. 'I put 'im on a barrel when 'e was lying second, 'e won't speak to me for a week'. 'Load of bloody bullshit 'e told you about 'aving radials on the back'. 'I 'ave about 'alf inch tread on that one, the others none at all'…'A nudge is all it takes on those corners'…. 'If you let the back end drift out, you lose ground'…. 'Get 'er well warm'.

Here and there, there are trickier matters to attend to. Why, for example, aren't Toddy's brakes working? The cognoscenti are consulted. 'Go and fetch Pete Archer, he'll know'. The car is on its side, propped up by an iron pole. Pete works with a hammer and spanner, and cleans the suspect part. 'Something else I've learnt', says Toddy.

Two others are under a car, puzzling over its erratic steering. Stan comes to have a look. 'Yer shaft is bent, look, that's what it is!' A begrimed face emerges from beneath the car. 'So is your fuckin' shaft bent,' he says, 'an' it allus 'as been!' Laughs all round.

Air filters, distributor caps, spark plugs, carburettors, petrol feed pipes and a hundred nuts and bolts receive attention. Wheels are changed, suspensions straightened, track rod ends replaced. Water is changed, petrol and oil topped up. In you jump and off you go—engine revving, spitting up the dust, accelerating away from the pits with screaming tyres. Noise, dirt, excitement, adrenalin, danger, speed. A moment of calm in the gathered ranks on the circuit to collect one's thoughts and lay a strategy. Then the fence is stitched up and away we go again, men on wheels in suits of armour.

In this pen picture of the pits at Brafield Stadium, Northampton, in between races at a banger-racing meeting, I try to re-create what seemed to me some remarkable human activity. At the time I was interested in people's enthusiasms, what they learnt from them and how these contributed to their identities. One driver told me These are not the sort of things you learn at school. This is something you pick up. I couldn't have changed a gearbox here twelve years ago. I take it to bits now without thinking about it'. Clearly the activity had some considerable educational significance for the participants. Later in the article, I analyse the educational gains for participants using the further resource of transcribed interviews. Before that, it seemed important to try to understand the nature of the activity—the sights, smells, feel, the excitement, the urgency, the brawn, the dirt, the noise, the skills, the humour—all part of the motivational and inspirational qualities it contained for the drivers.

Bob Jeffrey, Testing Teachers (Jeffrey and Woods (1998:14)

> As I contemplate the school's quiet confidence the quietness is punctuated from time to time with sounds from a classroom, the moving of furniture, the playing of some music, the hammering of a staple gun, the sudden whistling of a teacher briskly leaping down the stairs, or more unusually the burst of laughter from two or three teachers gathered in a corridor or a particular room. The silence is again disturbed by the low hum of two petrol lawn mowers as they circle the lone willow tree cutting the grass of the main green play area. This is Saturday morning and one wonders if the workers are getting overtime. The Premises Officer is playing his full part in the preparation. The staff have already commented on the surprise of having new locks on the loo doors.
>
> The school is at peace for a while, proud of itself and awaiting the inspection event with a quiet self-assurance. It is a calmness that has grown from exacting preparation and a feeling of inevitability that they can't do any more and they have done their best. All is nearly ready for the inspection event.
>
> As I leave, early in the afternoon, I hear some teachers making arrangements to meet in the nearest shopping centre for coffee and a late lunch. They seem to have it under control. All is nearly ready for the inspection event.
>
> It's ten past ten again on Sunday morning. As I enter the upper school building I can hear the drip of water in the toilet cisterns. There is a strong gale force wind and the beautiful Montana clematis is being blown vigorously on a playground trellis. This contrasts with the calmness inside the school. I can hear quiet voices in the smoking room.

In *Testing Teachers* we attempted a combination of story and analysis. In this book there are five fairly traditional analytical chapters, organised along lines recommended here in Chapter 2. In between and before and after the chapters, we intersperse the story of the inspection in one particular school. We begin with episode 1 of the story of the inspection week of one of our schools as recorded by Bob Jeffrey in field notes, and we continue the story by inserting further episodes in between the main chapters of the book. It is a typical story, at least as far as our six schools are concerned. It relates some of the events of the week from the Friday before the Monday when the inspection itself began, to the Friday evening when the teachers celebrated the end of the inspection. It is a story constructed at the time as seen through the eyes of the researcher. No attempt is made to analyse or to invoke theory. Rather the aim is to try to recreate the atmosphere of the event, to portray the feel and mood of it, and to convey the reader into the heart of one of the schools, as a prelude to the analysis that follows.

You might not wish to employ expressive writing throughout an article or book. It may be needed to describe key events or incidents, or to evoke atmospheres and feelings at certain moments. Also, apart from its expressive qualities, or perhaps because of them, it helps to make things interesting for the reader—quite a consideration when you are seeking to communicate something (Bailey 1996). Thus in an otherwise analytic piece, it could be used at the beginning, or even intermittently at the beginning of sections or chapters, to set the scene, awaken interest, whet the appetite, give a foretaste of what is to come. It carries the reader into the field setting, providing a stronger base for appreciation of the analysis.

Criteria for quality in expressive writing

What makes for adequacy in the kinds of writing discussed in this chapter?

- Writers need to be aware of their use of rhetoric, and readers also. It should be clear that it is a tool being used to extend and clarify, not in hidden ways to 'subtly' persuade.
- Basically expressive writing is an artistic pursuit, so aesthetic criteria apply. Have you captured a likeness, some quality in the social scene or actors under consideration, that comes from an 'enlightened eye' (Eisner 1991:1– 7) and gained through depth of insight and understanding? Typically, this will have been acquired through the intensive methods outlined in the introduction, and will enable you to portray something 'true to life' (*ibid.:* 108). Lofland (1971) calls this 'deep' or 'intimate' familiarity, and Ellis and Bochner (1996) talk of 'experiential sense' of the events.
- Are you able to communicate this to others, to provoke interest, awaken their interpretive powers, increase understanding, arouse feeling, enable readers to see something that they otherwise would have missed? Caroline Ellis (in Ellis and Bochner 1996:18) talks of using 'narrative strategies to transport readers into experiences and make them feel as well as think'. Wordsworth (in Wu 1994:258) talks of 'truth' being 'carried alive into the heart by passion'. Tierney (1993:303) wants to ask of an account, among other things, 'What is learned from the text…. Are there lessons to be learned from the text for my own life…has the text enabled me to reflect on my own life and work?' Whether the writing 'moves' the reader is a key factor, and one that can never be assessed until after the account has been written—though drafts can be tested on colleagues. To what extent has this been done?
- There is no one single, correct way to capture a reality, any more than there is to paint a picture or take a photograph. But the brushwork of the writer will be evident in such qualities as the skilful and accurate use of rhetoric, lucidity, linkages and flow, 'les mots justes', succinctness, how strikingly a point is made, how well a story or account hangs together, how much it 'rings true' within the experience of the reader. This is not necessarily at variance with the validity model with its reliance on evidence, as outlined in the

Introduction. The examples of expressive writing given earlier are descriptive, evocative, scene-setting pieces. The 'evidence' is in the power and credibility of the writing. It is not anti-realist. On the contrary, its warrant lies in its ability to portray different aspects of and kinds of realities.

- The writer conveys what it is like to be present in the social world, and does not just display it (Denzin 1997:139).
- How well is the expressive writing linked in with analysis? The examples given earlier do this in their various ways, though McCourt's piece is more of an evocative 'narrative of the self' (Richardson 1994b), speaking mainly to other criteria here. Wolcott cleverly interweaves narrative and analysis; Ellis' account is basically about identity, relationships and the sociology of the emotions, and there are indicators to these within the article; Willis' description feeds into theories of identity; and the banger racing informs theories of what education constitutes. This is where expressive forms of writing fit within the prevailing paradigm of qualitative research—though not all these authors might agree.
- How well are the author and others represented in the text? Has the author provided enough information of self and his/her engagement with the research to enable the reader to see how the text has been constructed? To what extent are the voices of others fairly represented in the account, and not modified to fit the author's own tale. Acker *et al.* (1983:431) feel that The first criterion of adequacy in this approach [i.e. interactionist research] is that the active voice of the subject should be heard in the account'. What implications, then, does this have for the voice of the author? Richardson (1990:27–8) concludes that 'As qualitative researchers, we can more easily write as situated, positioned authors, giving up, if we choose, our *authority* over the people we study, but not the responsibility of *authorship* over our texts'. In other words, there is a place for both faithful representation of the voices of others and the sociologist's analysis. They are not mutually exclusive (see also Sparkes 1994).
- To what extent is it providing new ways of seeing, new insights, experiences or understandings? It may be suggestive of totally new theory or casting new light on existing theory. It might bring together areas of thought, experience or analysis which previously seemed unconnected.
- How rigorous is the account? Wolcott (1994:354) prefers what he calls 'rigorous subjectivity' to objectivity. By this he means checking and rechecking the draft he is writing against the data, the situation and the individuals, seeking his own satisfaction through 'elusive criteria like balance, fairness, completeness, sensitivity'.

A personal style

> The poems I was writing were still mainly derivative…I had not yet found my own voice.
>
> (W.H.Auden, in Osborne 1995:58)

> The origins (of poetic tone) must always be in a suffered world rather than a conscious craft.
>
> (Elizabeth Bishop, quoted in Heaney 1995:134)

Denzin (1997:83), in relation to one of the examples he presents, speaks of 'a writing self that creates itself through its writing'. This is a reminder that not only is there a part of ourselves in what we write, but that there is also a becoming in the self as we write. It is a dialectical, developmental activity. Writers, therefore, over time develop a personal style or voice. This might be distinguished by what Golden-Biddle and Locke (1997:87) term 'authorial persistence'—the tendency for authors to use one particular style in writing up their research; or by 'crafting the atypical' (90)—taking an unusual approach. However, there is much more to style than this—vocabulary, idiom, grammar, ear, literary and academic knowledge, personal history and experiences, values, beliefs, aims, personality—in short the very person you are. Lucas (1974) in fact, argues that character or personality is the very foundation of style, not technique:

> If you wish your writing to seem good, your character must seem at least partly so. And since in the long run deception is likely to be found out, your character had better not only *seem* good, but *be* it. Those who publish make themselves public in more ways than they sometimes realize. Authors may sell their books; but they give themselves away.
>
> (50)

The human qualities that Lucas feels are generally admired are

> Good manners and courtesy towards readers, like Goldsmith's; good humour and gaiety, like Sterne's; good health and vitality, like Macaulay's; good sense and sincerity, like Johnson's.
>
> (66)

We could draw up a long list of characteristics, and while some of us would have similarities, especially through our allegiance to the model of 'institutional scientist' (Golden-Biddle and Locke 1997:73), there would be considerable differences. Much of this would be to do with values and our conception of the good life and a decent world. Much academic debate seems directed at making others more like us—one of the supreme ironies in a democracy that celebrates difference. However, if this element of style is cultivated within the kind of

framework suggested in this chapter, it can add to the richness of our academic' literature—and to our democracy—instead of deteriorating into acrimonious and counter-productive debate, as sometimes happens.

You have to be motivated to write. You write because you have something to say. If you want others to take note of what you say, it helps to say it in style.

Chapter 5
Editing

> The larger part of the labour of an author in composing his work is critical labour, the labour of sifting, combining, constructing, expunging, correcting, testing: this frightful toil is as much critical as creative.
>
> (T.S.Eliot, *The Function off Criticism,* quoted in Lodge 1996:175)

> Bad writing, according to Mitchell (1979), is like so much other crime, 'unimaginative and tiresomely predictable' (130); it 'requires more attention and backtracking than its ideas are worth' (152).
>
> (Sherman 1993:236)

> He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument.
>
> (William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream)*

> Every author's fairy godmother should provide him not only with a pen but also with a blue pencil.
>
> (Lucas 1974:88)

The process

We now come back to earth! The major part of writing for most people lies not in creatively composing, but in editing—re-writing, rephrasing, re-ordering, restructuring, moving parts of the text around, adding to and deleting text, clarifying, finding 'les mots justes', removing ambiguities, sharpening, tightening, tidying up grammar, and so on. This is even more important in qualitative research, since 'Discursive texts easily become wordy, run-on, repetitive, and redundant' (Sherman 1993:236). The initial task is to externalise material in the ways, for example, suggested in earlier chapters, and in a form that renders it amenable to editing. The first part might typically represent 10 per cent of the total writing activity, the second, editing, part 90 per cent. Not all authors proceed in this way. I have a colleague who does all the various drafts of

his articles in his head then writes an almost finished item. But he is the only one I know who works like this; he takes just as long, if not longer, than others over the process, and he confesses to suffering great mental anguish. Most of us have to carry on ‘crafting’ the article draft by draft, ‘wordsmithing’, synchronising, developing, integrating, polishing, refining. Sometimes we do more than this as new ideas come. Better ways of putting things sometimes lead to better thoughts.

Many at the beginning of their writing careers have problems of one kind or another. Perhaps it is to do with spelling, grammar, punctuation (especially where to put commas), sentence construction, saying what you think, or not thinking clearly enough in the first place. But I have seen people improve with a little help to become authorities themselves on the art of writing. ‘You, too, can be a writer!’ It might be helpful, therefore, for you to ask others to read what you have written, and to comment on clarity and accuracy as well as ideas and argument. I learnt a great deal about writing from editors at the Open University, who go through draft teaching units with attention to every detail. I used to think I wrote fairly well, but they made me put myself in the position of the reader and look more closely at my work. They picked out ambiguities which I had not seen, pressed for absolute accuracy and clarity, amended punctuation and spotted repetitions. On occasions they would suggest alternative phrasing, which could be much better than mine or might completely alter the sense. The latter just emphasised the obtuseness of my original construction, and forced me into revisions that left them in no doubt as to the meaning. You might not have the luxury of professional editors in your daily work, but I have also found that friends and colleagues will perform this function—after all, it works on a reciprocal basis. Be sure to ask for whatever comments the reader feels are appropriate, even if they seem ever so small and trivial. These are all important in fashioning a quality product.

A different cast of mind is required from that involved in creative writing, despite the fact that creative thinking might arise. This is neatly reflected in one’s attitude to the number of words in the text. I am pleased to see these increasing when I am constructing a draft, and equally, if not more pleased to see them decreasing when I am editing. Editing needs attention to the detail of the means of expression. Each paragraph, each sentence, each word has to be studied fairly intensively as you hone and fine-tune the text. This might help to re-fashion ideas and arguments in the draft as you find your words or form of words do not convey exactly the meaning you intend. Some ideas and meanings that are not important or that you cannot get straight may have to be dropped. So again, where anything, however flimsy, might appear in an initial draft, at the editing stage sections are removed where any flimsiness remains or cannot be resolved. Often it is necessary to be quite ruthless with some pet ideas, which, at the end of the day, just do not hold water. It also hurts to have to delete material that you went through the pain barrier to write. You go through it again on the way back! But sometimes it has to be done. Creative writing involves taking risks. By the editing stage, it should be clear whether they were worth taking.

The following are some of the considerations. Some recall points made earlier. You might not have succeeded in meeting them all in early drafts!

Insufficient guidance in the introduction

- Why are you writing this?
- Why in this form? (explain the structure)
- What are the major issues/themes?
- How does it connect to the literature?
- What are the major questions raised?
- How did you set about answering them?

Weak conclusions

Conclusions are often the most difficult sections to write. There may not be a clear body of material on which they are to be based. They are of a different order from other sections, so one almost has to switch to a different mental mode at a time when suffering from author exhaustion. Yet they are the most important part of papers. They need to be comprehensive if your paper is to have maximum impact, drawing out the full implications. Draw breath after writing the paper if necessary, but set aside time after a day or two to tackle the conclusion. In advance of this, it might be helpful to have kept a 'Conclusions' file throughout the writing up. 'Conclusion' thoughts often occur as you are thinking about and constructing the rest. In this way you accumulate substantial material, and tackling the conclusion is not such a daunting task. The kinds of considerations you might reflect on include:

- How has your paper answered the questions raised earlier?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the paper, and how might the latter be rectified?
- What further questions are raised? What indications are there for further research in the area?
- Return to the introduction—what difference has your paper made to the state of knowledge outlined there?
- Often you can provide a new slant on the way the data is presented in the body of the paper. For example, if the paper sets out a number of related categories, the conclusion might look across the categories. This could also be a separate section, but there may not be space for that.
- Evaluation is often left implicit—one approach good, one bad. If evaluation is involved, it needs to be made explicit, and reasons given why one is better than another.
- The conclusion might contain implications for policy or practice if these have not featured in the body of the article.

Similar material in different sections

There is a need to synchronise. Perhaps you have not quite managed to make your categories mutually exclusive. Some of the material may need re-ordering or editing or deleting, some of the categories may need adjusting, some may need merging.

Theoretical inadequacy

Common forms of this among ethnographic research include the following:

Exampling

All that is done is to provide further illustrations of somebody else's concepts or theoretical constructs. Unless deliberately set up as a replication study, or seeking to develop formal from substantive theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967), there is little worth in this. What should be done is to re-examine the material carefully to tell us how it advances understanding in these areas. More appropriate, if one knew the research was going to involve these theoretical areas, would be to consider: How might they be tested? What considerations do they omit? How adequate are they as representations of the data? Do my data suggest modifications or development of the concept or theory?

Theoretical lag or mismatch

A good illustration of this 'lag' is the 'characteristics' model noted by D. Hargreaves (1977) attending much of the early 'interactionist' work in schools, as opposed to a more purist 'process' model The characteristics model was a hangover from psychological approaches, especially interaction analysis, which had certain affinities with ethnography. 'Theoretical lag' may come about through one's own biography. Steeped in certain methods and approaches by training and experience, we may find it difficult to view the world otherwise.

Under-theorised description

Ethnography is description by definition, but it is description that is theoretically informed (see Hammersley 1980). Under-theorised description is little more than a presentation of the data as it stands, with little attempt to analyse, explain, draw out common features across situations, identify patterns of behaviour, syndromes of factors, and so forth. Seek to bring out the theory behind the facts and the description:

- Reading the relevant literature is essential for this. New theory is nearly always created by the interplay between existing literature and the data. There may be inconsistencies, contradictions or inadequacies in existing theory.
- Seek alternative explanations. Don't be satisfied with the first plausible one. Be your own devil's advocate. Assume an oppositional, critical role towards your own work. Conduct a debate with yourself on the strengths and weaknesses, seeking to shore up weaknesses and undermine claims to strength. Role-play somebody of different values and beliefs from yourself-how would they interpret your paper?
- Test out your ideas on others—show drafts to as many as possible. This is both a test of what you have done, and an aid to further creativity. Others will spot

  - omissions ('Have you read…?'; 'I think you should say something about…')
  - obfuscations ('What do you mean by…?')
  - inadequacies ('Can you say a little more about…?')
  - alternatives ('Yes, but what about…?')
  - unconvincing arguments ('I don't agree with you')

Faulty grammar

With spelling and grammar checks and 'auto-corrects' on computers now, these should be less of a problem, except that most of these checks are set up with American spelling and grammar and by no means everybody has access to such a resource. Nor do these checks pick up all the faults. Common problems are:

- Sentences. Not a sentence, or too many in one. Consider, for example, the following:

  For the bilingual pupils in our study, this lesson represented what we would suggest as being an example of the largely monocultural nature of the National Curriculum as well as the difficulties arising from teachers conforming to this model at the expense of taking opportunities to make their work relevant to their children by means of choosing historical figures with which the children could identify culturally or by using the theme of Boudica more creatively by inviting children to use the story as a basis for their own imaginative story work rather than an insistence on the retention of facts.

My comment in the margin was 'Gosh!'. I felt quite breathless when I got through to the end. There is a certain amount of circumlocution here—an indirect way of making the point. My suggested revision was 'It also shows what is lost by teachers not making the children's work more relevant, for example by

using Boudicca as a basis for their own imaginative story work'. The other key points—about monoculturalism and fact retention—had already been made.

- Sense. Not clear.
- Punctuation, especially use of the apostrophe and comma.
- Tenses. Often not standardised. A common fault is to mix present and past tenses when describing a situation or setting a scene.
- Order of words in a sentence. Reading aloud sometimes helps: does it sound right?
- Consistency of phrasing (i.e. a second phrase not relating to the right subject in the first phrase).
- Single subjects, but plural pronouns and verbs, or vice-versa. For example, 'The child has to learn the cultural expectations of themselves as pupil both in their native culture and the English school culture'.
- Spelling (e.g. confusion between 'affected' and 'effected').

Especially in the early stages of your writing career, you might find a dictionary of grammar and usage helpful. The best known is Fowler's A *Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1926). I have An ABC *of English Usage* by H.A.Treble and G.H.Vallins (1936), which I seem to have acquired from my sister's schooldays, but which I still find useful. They advise on such things as the position of the comma, correct spellings, sentence construction, tenses, cases, 'shall' and 'will', 'which' and 'that', 'might' and 'may', parts of speech, and prepositional idiom.

Style

Common problems:

- Voice. Use active rather then passive verbs, and 'I' rather than the third person.
- Repetition. This includes repetition in transcript material; of points in transcript material and in the text by way of introduction or comment, though sometimes this is necessary; also of the same words or constructions close together in the text. Repetition becomes boring, and is hardly ever necessary where it is not being used for purposes of emphasis. Some examples of constructions repeated are:

  'After a short time' was repeated three times in one paragraph (you could vary this with 'before long', 'soon' or 'shortly')

  A student was extremely fond of starting sentences with 'In this way' (alternatives: 'so', 'thus', 'similarly' or 'as a consequence')

  The first line below introduces a piece of transcript beginning with the line following. The latter could have been deleted:

'Part of the concern about the examination was the mystery of it all: "I suppose it is because of the mystery of it all…"'

- Redundancy. Use of unnecessary words. See also 'sentences' in above section on faulty grammar. Examples:

  'This same type of pressure existed also'
  'Yet on the whole much of the curriculum…'
  'An example of how teachers sought to make connections is illustrated in the following lesson'
  'Teachers were concerned primarily with the children's social
  'disadvantage more so than any other issue'
  '…rose to a crescendo'
  'She initially began the story…'
  'The disciplinary measures taken were not adequate enough'

- Clutter (as against succinctness). This is the commonest general fault I have found in students' work. There are many kinds of clutter—excessive words, unnecessary names of people or organisations, irrelevant material, unnecessary statements, too lengthy or too many quotes from other people's work, excessive transcript, 'concepting', i.e. strewing the text with illustrations of concepts that have already been well established in others' work; too many examples of a similar kind—adding to no great purpose rather than triangulating. Faulty organisation can promote clutter.
- Undisciplined writing. This is where the author has not thought through the purport of what he or she is writing. There might be general confusion, uncertainty, second or contradictory thoughts, or 'tributary' writing (wandering off up side streams). A writer might confess to having 'lost it', i.e. the thread of the argument. This leads to verbosity, stream-of-consciousness thinking, non-sequiturs, conflation of ideas or issues. This is almost like saying 'I'm not sure what I want to say exactly—perhaps the reader can sort it out'. The solution may reside in preceding stages—data collection and analysis. If the data is good, you may need to return to analysis. Good housekeeping helps correct indiscipline, both on computers and in hard copy. Be very systematic about keeping records; open files for each category, chapter or major item (reviewing occasionally to see if some belong together or need re-ordering); code data for analysis and so that they cross-relate (see Strauss and Corbin 1990).
- Poor expression. This can come from using clichés, truisms, old, tired or inappropriate metaphors, flowery, over-elaborated writing, 'flat' description, big words. Often what might seem good at first attempt makes you cringe when you come back to it a few days later. This is probably a good feeling to get, as it is a defence against self-indulgence and dilettantism. Consulting others, and insisting they do not pull any punches, is another. A thesaurus and a good dictionary can be useful, not for becoming a slave to or for discovering

'big words', but rather for opening up the mind to new possibilities. Reading good literature also helps.

- Links between sentences, paragraphs, sections and chapters. These are important for the 'music' of the text—flow and rhythm. The reader is carried along by conjunctive adverbs and adverbial phrases ('however', 'therefore', 'similarly', 'on the other hand', 'by contrast', 'not only…but also', 'in view of this', 'at the same time', 'even so', and more subtle ones that draw attention to a particular point ('rather ironically…').
- Lucidity (as against opacity, vagueness, woolliness). Drafts need to be read very carefully. Put yourself in the position of the reader. Is everything crystal clear? Note that it has to be clear to you before you write for others (as opposed to writing for oneself, which can be exploratory). There are also a number of purely editing points that you should bear in mind, for example, sentences beginning with This' or containing 'it'—it is not always clear to the reader what these refer to.
- Accuracy. Often things are not quite right—a word, a phrase, a conjuncture. Sometimes you do have to work hard to say what you want to say, and it may take several attempts. A teacher friend of mind writing his biography told me it took him six attempts to get one chapter right. 'It kept coming out wrong. That's not quite what I wanted to say'. Little points of detail are also important. Compare 'Nor did teachers use any words' with 'Nor were teachers heard to use any words'. Sometimes over a number of drafts points can get refined out of synchronism with the original data. This can happen with the alteration of just one word. In some instances you may need to go back to cross-check the draft with your original data.
- Slang. Avoid this, unless in quoted material.
- Consistency. Ensure that terms and references are used in the same way throughout: 'Y1', 'Yr 1' or 'Year One'? 'Fieldnote 6 February 1995' or 'FN 4/2/95'? 'science' or 'Science'? 'headteacher', 'Headteacher', 'head teacher' or 'head'?
- Presentational defects. I am thinking here of the unnecessary use of capital letters, or of aside remarks in brackets, undue emphases, typographical errors, inaccurate or incomplete referencing, faulty formatting, misquotations, messy pages, faint print. Any of these could entail your work being returned to you unread.

Structure

This assumes a standard model as outlined in Chapter 2.

- Organise paper in sections and subsections, with an introduction and a conclusion.
- 'Tighten up', ensuring that sections are closely linked, lead from one to another, and that there are no loose ends. Look for opportunities for reprises,

for cross-references between sections—though do not overdo this, as they can become obscure and/or tedious.
- Try to secure a developing argument through the paper—one point leads to another, or raises further questions (as opposed to a structure which is little more than a list of points—ODTAA—'one damn thing after another').
- Display a table of contents at the beginning to give an overview of the chapter —you may wish to re-organise, amalgamate or delete some sections/ subsections.

Use of transcripts

Unless there is a special reason for using a complete transcript, or sections of same, um's and ah's and non-verbals and all, and if all that is required is content,

- Edit for sense, repetition, mannerisms, etc.
- Use paraphrasing and reported speech occasionally to save space, perhaps incorporating the key comments into the main text.
- Check for clarity. People speak differently from the way they write. You are translating their spoken words into text. There are dangers of adulterating the spoken word in these techniques, but where you have reams of transcript, and much of it in stream-of-consciousness form, you have no choice. In many cases, respondent validation of your account will be possible.
- Check for punctuation.
- Bear in mind the value of side-by-side analysis of long pieces of transcript of interview or classroom interaction where these are used (convenient for the reader,butalsoausefulcheckontheneedforthelengthy extract).
- Consider alternative ways of presenting the material.

Misuse of examples

- All claims need good examples, preferably more than one of contrasting kinds.
- Beware of 'exampling'—seeking to prove a point by giving just one example.
- Examples are subject to the problems listed above. They take up space. Are they worth it? Are they pulling their weight, or are they mainly padding? Can they be trimmed without threats to validity?

Evidence

- Support all claims with as strong evidence as possible.
- Be clear as to what constitutes strong evidence—triangulation, lengthy and detailed observation, repeated interviews, attention to sampling, etc.

- Beware of speculation (‘perhaps’, ‘may be’). This is acceptable for setting up hypotheses or qualification of one’s findings, but not usually for the findings themselves.
- Make appropriate claims, neither under-or over-claiming.
- Be sure about what you are and are not claiming.
- Significance needs to be established—often it is not clear why some piece of data or some findings are significant. Why does it matter? So what?

Bias

This can show in various ways:

- Slants—the way the text is written constructs an inference not warranted by the data.
- Unwarranted and hidden use of ‘persuasive rhetoric’.
- Unwarranted claims to generality, e.g. ‘Alison at Trafflon sums up what many teachers feel’.
- Use of certain non-neutral, loaded words slipped in unobtrusively, e.g. ‘endured’, ‘were given’, ‘unfortunately’.
- Thin evidence supporting strong assertions.
- Mind made up in advance and closed to other possibilities—research used to support what one already knows.

Ethics

You need to check carefully for

- Libellous statements. What might seem unproblematic in draft can look a lot different in print.
- Sexist or racist writing.
- Pseudonyms used for people and places, unless otherwise agreed, and other identifiers removed. The latter point is often forgotten. Even though not named, it might be obvious who somebody is by the descriptions given or the language reported.
- Use of appropriate tone (see Chapter 3).
- Contracts being honoured. For example, if there has been an agreement that people featuring in the research would see drafts of papers, this must be done. Some researchers might feel the urge, having acquired the data, to ‘cut and run’ from the research site to the sanctity of one’s study. But apart from being discourteous, such behaviour could prejudice the chances of other researchers being granted access.

References and literature

- Misuse of references. Precision is needed. Use references to substantiate points, but use organically within the text instead of just sticking them in wherever possible. There is a need to say exactly how they substantiate points —don't just throw them in to impress. Don't be lazy and quote chunks of unremarkable text where you yourself should be doing the writing. You might be using quotes for

  (a) citing other sources of evidence—but you need to know how strong and how appropriate that evidence is;
  (b) making a point very aptly;
  (c) the power of the words used.

- Uncritical use of references. Interrogate the literature as well as your own data and texts. If strongly persuaded by an article, ask what it doesn't do, what is wrong with it (there is always something!).
- Remember to compile a list of full references, with page numbers for quotes used, as you go along. Finding elusive references and page numbers for quotes that you have casually noted can be a nightmare at the end of the line.

The 'best shot'

Finally, you need to accept imperfection. If you are too much of a perfectionist you will never publish anything. Accept that there will be defects in the final product. In fact Delamont (1992:182) advises 'Don't get it right, get it written'. I have seen drafts from students that actually deteriorate beyond a certain point. How can we identify when we have reached the optimum, where, all things considered, 'that's the best we can do'? Things to take into account are:

- What you have already written. On balance, is there value in it? Is it reasonably well organised and presented? Does it meet your own criteria of worthiness? Will you be pleased to see this in print?
- Resources still at your disposal, particularly personal resources. How is your stamina, interest, sanity?
- The time factor. Perhaps you have a deadline, and/or other deadlines are looming. Occasionally a piece of writing 'takes as long as it takes', but we do not always have the luxury of eternal time, and this runs against the basic 'imperfection' point here.
- Other pressing matters, such as other academic work like teaching and administration, the rest of your life, family responsibilities.

Key words

- Reader-friendliness
- Clarity
- Richness (of data)
- Tightness (of organisation)
- Development (of argument)
- Succinctness
- Fairness
- Balance
- Interest

Example of an edited text

Figure 5.1 is an example of a passage of text marked up for revision.

The revised version reads as follows:

> From the school, they expected a variety of things, ranging from good discipline (Mr Sarwar, Jabidul's father) to community education. Mrs Mousaf (Rushan's mother), for example, was keen 'not to isolate the school but make it a community school', and Mr Sarwar had chosen the school because he judged it more suitable culturally for Jabidul.
>
> Some of the nursery parents voiced concern about the more long term use of play in the nursery. Aleena (Amar's mother) favoured a more structured approach during the children's last term so that they would be better prepared for lower school. Mr Ali's (Iqbal's father) view was 'let them play first from three to four, then from four they should slowly start breaking them into having some experience of school' (Mrs *Ali is nodding in agreement*).
>
> The parents of the lower school children were pleased with the progress their children were making and held high opinions of the teachers. Hasanan's mother, for example, was delighted with her daughter's first report.

Comment

The first sentence ('All the parents…') has been put at the beginning of the whole section, as it is a general comment applying to all the points mentioned about the parents. Other changes are aimed at making the points intended in as clear, direct, and succinct a way as possible.

From the school, they expected a variety of things ranging from

All the parents had a positive attitude towards their children's education, and took a keen interest. ~~Some parents, although they accepted the principle of play as a means of delivering the curriculum, were looking for something more~~. ~~This varied from wanting to see~~ good discipline (Mr Sarwar, Jabidul's father) to ~~viewing the school as a central part of a community of cultures. his was particularly true of~~ community education. Mrs Mousaf (Rushan's mother), for example, ~~who~~ was keen "not to isolate the school but to make it a community school," and ~~of~~ Mr Sarwar ~~again who~~ had ~~specifically~~ chosen the school because ~~it would be~~ he judged it more suitable culturally for Jabidul.

some of the nursery parents voiced concern about the more long term use of play in the nursery. ~~They expressed a preference for a more formal academic approach eventually taking precedence.~~ Aleena (Amar's mother) ~~said that she would like to see the children have~~ favoured a more structured approach during the~~ir~~ children's last term ~~in the nursery~~ so that they would be better prepared for ~~what she perceived as the more formal systems operating in~~ the lower school~~s~~. Mr ~~and Mrs~~ Ali's (Iqbal's ~~parents~~ father) ~~considered that once a child had reached the age of four more formal work should begin:~~ view was

> ~~I think play to a certain extent in OK but if they're going there to paint, well painting's OK for them, my view is~~ let them play first from three to four then from four they should slowly~~, slowly~~ start breaking them into having some experience of school (*Mrs Ali is nodding in agreement*).

~~All of~~ The ~~lower school~~ parents of the children ~~interviewed~~ were ~~particularly~~ pleased with the progress their children were making ~~at the school~~ and held high opinions of the teachers. ~~This in part was due to the way their children talked about work they had covered in school, but also through their meetings with teachers at parents' evenings. On these occasions the parents were given written reports on their children which they welcomed. For Hasanan's mother the receipt of her daughter's first report was strongly felt by her mother as an indication of her daughter's progress during her first years at school:~~

Hasanan's mother, for example, was delighted with her daughter's first report

Figure 5.1 Example of a page of text marked up for revision

Example of edited text containing transcript

Unedited version

Inspectors drifted in and out of lessons, missing an introduction or leaving just as the activity started and often didn't stay to hear the winding up of the lesson much to the chagrin of the teachers who felt as if they were being treated as functionaries.

> I find that's an incredible attitude, just to walk in whilst lessons are going on. I find it bad manners for a start because if you want to find out about something you don't walk in the middle of the lesson. If you want to see what's gone on before, what the children contributed to the lesson, and what's going to happen, I think most teachers would agree that you'd rather have them in at the beginning of the lesson rather than just wandering in.

The inspector that interviewed Margaret hadn't read her policy and other paperwork before he talked to her. He just gave her a list of questions thirty minutes prior to the interview and proceeded to type very slowly the answers into a laptop computer.

> He sat at the table light with his lap top and he just went down the list and asked a question and typed it in the answer. I kept saying to him 'am I going too fast'. He stopped me making conversation. Some times I just kept thinking subconsciously 'you're racing Margaret, stop it because he can't write all that'. I remembered somebody came in while he was typing and he didn't even look up and they started to apologise, and he still didn't look up. May be once or twice he may have looked up and then asked me the next question. I think this is why he gave me the questions before hand, so he could get them down and get them in, and I had them in front of me so that we didn't have any delays with me not knowing what he was asking, He didn't look at my files but he asked me if I had any qualifications, or if I done any courses. That is the only one time he did stop, and he was very impressed when I said 'yes' I did the Special Needs course at Christ Church College in Canterbury—'oh, you did that there—is Jo Blogs still there', he said to me. My reaction was just to get it done and over with. I didn't care once it was over, quite honestly. As soon as I got up to go he said 'take your files' because he didn't want them. When I got up I had them in my hands and walked to the door, but I couldn't get out because of the low and high handles, so I thought 'do I go all the way back', I thought 'no he will open it for me', so I looked around and he was still typing away, so I said 'excuse me, do you think you could open the door for me please, I can't get out'.

Edited version

Inspectors drifted in and out of lessons, missing an introduction or leaving just as the activity started. They often didn't stay to hear the winding up of the lesson, much to the chagrin of the teachers who felt as if they were being treated as functionaries. Margaret found it

> an incredible attitude (and) bad manners. If you want to see what's gone on before, what the children contributed to the lesson, and what's going to happen, you'd rather have them in at the beginning of the lesson rather than just wandering in.

The inspector that interviewed Margaret hadn't read her policy and other paperwork before he talked to her. He just gave her a list of questions thirty minutes prior to the interview and typed the answers into a laptop computer very slowly. There was no conversation, and Margaret was worried about 'going too fast'. He didn't even look up when someone else came in, only 'once or twice' when asking a question. When she left, bearing her stack of files, she found she could not open the door, and thought he might open it for her, but when she looked around, he was still typing. She had to say, 'Excuse me, do you think you could open the door for me please, I can't get out'.

Chapter 6
Collaborative writing

> In the 'Lone Ranger' approach, ethnographers have gone out single-handedly into the bitterly conflictual social world to bring data back alive. This approach has demanded considerable strength and courage much of the time and almost always an ability to operate alone, with little or no support and inspiration from colleagues.
>
> (Douglas 1976:192)

Ethnography by tradition is an individual pursuit. The individualism applies to more than fieldwork. The researcher is the main research instrument, investing a great deal of self into research design and data collection, and analysing and writing up in one's own style and through one's own frameworks. Relationships are personal. The entire research is circumscribed by the person of the researcher.

However, two developments in recent years have assisted the use of teamwork in ethnography. One is the advances in computer technology, which have brought the facility of links among team members through electronic mail. The other, in England at least, is the establishment of the 'research assessment exercise' (RAE). The RAE has its problems, but it has established a basis on which successful research institutions are guaranteed funds for a period sufficient to keep successful research personnel in post for longer periods than formerly. I have benefited from both of these over the past seven years. Here I consider the merits of working in a team for writing up research. For more extended discussion of the origins, composition, structure and general mode of operation of the research teams, see Woods *et al.* (in press), and for more extended examples in relation to writing, see Woods *et al* (1998).

Research horizons

Teamwork can open up new, unforeseen opportunities for its members. Ideas are often generated and formulated in discussion. They emerge from the interaction as people contribute different perspectives, pool their knowledge, talk round points, challenge and defend arguments. Another's perspective can set off new chains of thought, or enable material to be seen in a new light. They may be

comparatively small points—a contrary point of view or different interpretation, the suggested relevance of a sociological concept or piece of literature, a new theoretical slant, the introduction of some comparative material, a suggestion for the next step. It can be comparatively major, as with the generation of our whole team book on 'restructuring', which drew on the individual projects of members of the team (Woods *et al.* 1997). Common themes that linked the projects had been developed in discussion as part of the 'support' function of the group, but had come to take on a life of their own.

Teamwork also maximises opportunities for dissemination of research. Members have their own contacts, and their own favourite venues and journals, for which joint presentations will be made. Since there are a number of people to help with these, a higher number of possibilities and invitations can be taken up than if one were operating alone. Responsibilities and workloads can be shared out among the group, so that no single member is unduly overloaded at any particular time.

Similarly, the numbers of publications produced by members of the group acting in some kind of alliance with each other are rather higher than would be the case if individuals were operating alone. Some of these are internally generated, such as the 1997 book, and methods papers, of which the team papers were two, in addition to books and papers on individual projects. Even with the latter, the prospect of a book on the project has been much enhanced by the contributions of linked students, as in the 'child-meaningful' research (see Woods *et al.* 1999). Some publications are externally generated, coming from invitations, or from personal contacts of team members.

In short, there has been a profusion of outlets for the research. There has been considerable help within the team in reaching these. In a sense, individuals are pulled along by the team in meeting assignments. A high productivity rate becomes part of the group culture. There is a feeling of sustained momentum—there are deadlines, meetings and targets at various levels reaching far into the future. This may, of course, not be suitable for all kinds of research, and we would not recommend it simply as a way of ministering to the RAE. Some matters may require a lengthy gestation. But for our current mode of research, which we see as highly relevant to policy and issues of the day, a comparatively fast turn-round is necessary if the research is to have any effect in an educational world subject to continuing and rapid change.

Muddling through

Our general approach to analysis is the 'constant comparative' method (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Compared to the lone ethnographer, the use of a team expands the substantive comparative base, and also the interpretive perspectives through which the comparisons are made. Liggett *et al.* (1994:84) derive two lessons from their experiences here. The first concerns the benefits of 'muddling through' (that is, learning as they wrote rather than planning in detail from the

outset), for ‘in the “doing” of writing and thinking, we gained an appreciation of the need to have our written thoughts modified’; the other was in ‘discovering anew the importance of individual latitude, even in writing’. We would agree with the first point, and partly with the second. Our ‘muddling through’ includes:

- Shooting a particular rocket into orbit and keeping it there by developing it or letting it fall to earth as a damp squib. This is an essential part of muddling through, in that imagination, spontaneity and enthusiasm are given free rein. It takes a number of damp squibs to get a rocket successfully established in orbit.
- Being left with ‘impasses’, which then had to be taken up later by e-mail after we had reflected at leisure about the problem. After a few exchanges the impasse either becomes resolved with renewed interest or by the general acceptance of a perspective we can live with. Alternatively, we may drop the idea or material, as we did with a proposed chapter for the ‘restructuring’ book on changes in pedagogy.
- Presenting a large amount of data with some cursory and tentative initial analysis and allowing the group to give their views on it. This invariably stimulates the originator to do another draft by firming up his or her ideas or generating new insights. We consider it crucial for individuals to be able to work on the data for a significant period before necessarily committing themselves to final analysis, because we are less willing to give up some ideas if we have invested considerable time in analysis. The quality of analysis is enhanced by continual kneading, and the team engagement assists in that process.

Comparative development

We have considered it important for individuals to have a considerable degree of ownership and control of their own projects, and we have had discretion in how we present these, in articles, papers and symposia, relying on the team for ‘critical friendly’ comments in the preparation. But we have also written some genuinely ‘team’ papers, most notably in the ‘restructuring’ book. Chapter 4 of this book, ‘Making the new head’s role’, provides a good example of the processes involved. Here we consider how three successful primary school heads of widely varying styles were adapting to the radical changes in their role in recent years. We aimed to show some of the ‘complicated process’ (Smulyan 1996:186) in such adjustment, as opposed to the ‘static models’ *(ibid.)* usually proposed, to show there is more to success than any simple listing of factors, and that there is more than one route to that success. Stages in the development of this chapter were:

- The recognition that we had a potentially highly productive comparative base. Particularly interesting head teachers figured prominently in Bob’s, Geoff’s

and Mari's individual projects. Mari's was the subject of an early paper. Several months later, Geoff 's featured in a draft chapter of his thesis. Mari's head teacher became even more prominent, and of special interest to Bob (researching the effect of Ofsted inspections), following an Ofsted inspection at her school. Bob thought a joint paper on head teachers would be interesting if the opportunity arose.

- The opportunity came with the book. But on what basis would the comparison be made? We had already characterised Mari's head as the 'composite head', the distinguishing feature of which was her attempt to take on new aspects of the role without relinquishing any of the old. Geoff felt that his represented an 'entrepreneurial head', marked by the head's self-confident adoption of the new managerial aspects of the role, which were anathema at the time to Mari's head. Arising from discussion, Bob reported that his head teacher (yet to be written about) was unlike both of these, and his description led Geoff to suggest that he was more of a 'reflective realist'. These styles now had to be unpacked, and compared and contrasted.
- We had to find a way of doing this. After several attempts, we decided to structure the discussion around five key aspects of the head teacher's role, as suggested by our research and the existing literature. These were: promoting and guarding the school ethos; gate-keeping; managing; professional leadership; and cultural leadership.
- Applying these to each of the three cases revealed some shortage of data in some areas. Files and transcripts had to be searched, and in some instances, new focused data gathered on specific areas. This follows the classic data—analysis—more data—more refined analysis spiral of qualitative research (Lacey 1976).
- The comparisons revealed other weaknesses in the individual cases. Some arguments needed sharpening, some data re-ordered. Other ideas were strengthened, such as that of Mari's head teacher as a 'professional mother' in her management style. Bob's head teacher, who had come late into the frame, had to be re-interviewed to bring the data base up to the level of the others.
- The organisation of the chapter went through several experiments. The choice eventually was between presenting the head teachers individually, in succession; or structuring the chapter on the five major categories. In the end, we felt it important to preserve the individuality of the head teachers, examining them along the five categories in turn; but reviewing their styles and their main features in a summary at the end.

Refining arguments

The team also helps in the refinement of arguments. Others can spot weaknesses in cases or see alternative explanations. There have been several occasions where we have debated key points, which have invariably followed the formula:

- Introduction of initial argument in a draft paper
- Criticism of this on the grounds of insufficient or contradictory evidence, and suggestion of an alternative explanation
- Re-formulation of the argument with closer reference to the evidence, and perhaps the introduction of new evidence
- If not convinced, a stronger presentation of the alternative case, marshalling evidence from a wider field, perhaps one of the other projects
- Further tightening of the initial argument, and expanding on why it was preferred to alternatives

The interpretation of a head teacher's reactions to an Ofsted inspection in chapter 5 of Woods *et al.* (1997) proceeded in this way. The issue was whether the joy and elation she felt at getting a good report on her management skills, which had been a matter of some concern to her, was uplifting, enskilling and re-professionalising; or rather marking a move towards managerialism and technicism by abrogating judgement on her abilities to an external agency. The debate was a reminder that an individual researcher could have put up an equally plausible case for either interpretation (Smith 1989). As it was, we were forced to make the best possible case for the argument preferred, while admitting the possible relevance of the other if certain factors applied.

These debates take place in face-to-face meetings, but are reinforced, importantly, by e-mail. The exchange of memos among the team enables the debate to continue outside meetings, and forces a different kind of concentration on the issue. In the remainder of this chapter, I draw from e-mail messages that passed among the team during the construction of a book chapter in December 1996/January 1997 to illustrate the advantages of teamwork and technology as I see them (see Woods *et al.* 1998 for the full e-mails).

Enhanced validity

Validity was enhanced in the following ways:

- There is a tone of constructive critique throughout, and a concern to 'get things right'.
- Hypothesising. One might suggest possible theoretical formulations based on others' data and ideas. This was a way of trying to combine primary analysis with what seemed like appropriate ideas from the related literature; and to apply it to the full range of the sample. Also to cast it in the theoretical terms we had developed in the previous chapter:

> Bob, A few thoughts on chapter 3 following the meeting. How about 'Tensions in the New Teacher Role' as a title, taking up the theoretical line of chapter 2? [In Chapter 2, we had argued that there had been a marked change in teachers' classroom experience from one

> characterised by dilemmas which were amenable to professional resolution, to one of 'tension' and 'constraint' marked by less choice and more personal conflict] We could argue that the standard term of 'role conflict' is not adequate for current developments, and that 'role tension' is more appropriate for our teachers. Many instances of role conflict do not invade the teacher's inner self-they are more situational than personal, and hence dilemmatic. The chapter might then expand on 'role tension' as a theoretical idea, using the data to further our thinking on role theory. What are its properties? How does it arise? How is it experienced? How is it resolved? With regard to the latter, we might develop Lacey's (1977) modes of strategic orientation, particularly as this is taken up in chapter 5 or 6. Some hypothethical instances might be…
>
> (e-mail from Peter, 1 December 1996)

- Maximising the degree of fit between categories and data. This had the effect of refining the categories, in this case dividing the 'enhanced' category between those who were more or less uneqivocally enhanced, and those who were ambivalent.

> The categories look fine but I'm not sure the examples we have in the first ones [enhancement] are particularly powerful. While Elizabeth is certainly ambivalent about her role, I'm not sure that she is enhanced by it. In fact, in the transcript there are a number of indications of stress. So real tensions and ambivalence but little enhancement as I see it, though she does say she likes aspects of the managerial role.
>
> (e-mail from Geoff, 2 January 1997)

- Testing the developing categories on one's own teachers who have not featured in the category generation:

> Simply for reference I would see Theresa [a teacher in Mari's school who features elsewhere in the book] as a Supporting Conformist, though in the conclusion it may be worth pointing out, as Bob said, that the teachers may exhibit aspects of many of the other categories, and these are not hard and fast sets.
>
> (from e-mail from Mari, 8 January 1997)

- checking on items that are not clear or complete, or on which one has doubts:

> I've sketched out an introduction to chapter 4, suggested a typology that seems to match Bob's and the dilemmas' model, and begun to rework and edit the detailed examination of cases. Because of the shortage of time, I'm zapping this through for comment as I continue to work on the rest. Does it look as if it's going to work? The biggest difficulty I have at the moment, Bob, is the 'spoiled self (constraints) category in your 'Outline D3 note'. I have the rerouters and fragmenters in here. I'm not

> sure where you see your 'adjusters' fitting in to this framework. How do they differ from 'enhancers' (perhaps they are a third sub-category?) and/or conformists (perhaps a fourth subcategory?)
>
> (e-mail from Peter, 1 January 1997)

- seeking to inject balance. Bob wrote the first draft of the chapter and posed a number of questions to the team:

> Have I theorised enough?
>
> Is the data limited by being drawn on Ofsted material?
>
> Are the characters differentiated enough, and if so, what is the conclusion about the differentiation?
>
> The methodology section may need pulling out. Is it too negative, and if so, what can we do?
>
> Does anyone else have data to support or critique the characterisation/categories?
>
> There is not much connection made with the other chapters. This may mean a lot more input

Bob's critique of his own draft illustrates a typical mode of presentation in the team, and presages the problems to be experienced over coherence and connectedness. The draft was discussed at length at the next team meeting. The data were powerful, but we thought the categories too oriented toward the new managerial aspects of the teacher role, important though they were, and the data too localised within teachers' experiences of Ofsted inspections (the subject of Bob's individual research at the time). The categories also leant heavily in a critical direction (which might have been because of the Ofsted cast of the research) and we wondered if some teachers welcomed the role changes rather more than depicted. There were also questions of the theoretical approach of the chapter and how the chapter would fit within the structure of the book. We debated whether to illustrate general categories by single cases, or to go for identifying sub-categories across a range of cases comprising a category. The latter was more difficult, but more analytical, so we opted for it, despite the pressure on time.

Enrichment

There is a potential improvement to quality as a result of input from various perspectives, which might be termed 'writer triangulation'. Individuals bring their own experience, research, knowledge, literature command, personal contacts and insights to bear. They donate new material, and/or develop what is already there, and suggest connections, thus contributing to a spiralling tendency which generates the impetus discussed below. In this way, the typology was developed and integrated with the rest of the text:

Bob,

Thanks for your notes and extra info. I'll get on with incorporating these into a D5. At the same time, I think it would be good if you could add in some of the bits you suggested:

1 *Sinkers:* There might be a point in including these here as a kind of 'pre-stress' group, on the edge of becoming part of chapter 6 (the stress chapter) but not quite there yet. Because Lucy has left, perhaps she belongs in chapter 6 (any nice quote from her to include there?). But the other two might qualify. What do you think? I feel the chapter does need some stiffening in that area.
2 *Disturbed Conformists* and *Survivors.* Yes, it would probably be a good idea to standardise these with the rest, and include other examples, if you have the data.

(e-mail from Peter, 7 January 1997)

Having maximised input from the various members, the team is then faced with the task of editing and fine-tuning. Again, this process was largely a matter of discussion:

1 I think the cuts are fine except for one element. It seems to me to be important that 2 of the Non Conformists—Clare and Corrine—feel so strongly that they do not fear the sack even though they have made commitments to teaching in the past.
2 Finding more cuts. The Ambivalent Enhancers might be one possibility for we should emphasise their enhancement and perhaps just make the point about their ambivalence in less elaborate terms, for we see them as enhancers in the first place rather than very disturbed. There is a lot of disturbed evidence from Toni.

With regards to the Compliers I think the emphasis should be on 'supportive', 'surviving' and 'disturbed'. In this way we may help deal with the problem of repetition by bringing the reader's attention to these elements rather than the contexts themselves. Some cuts may be possible from the Supportive and Disturbed (Surviving is shorter) and might—to use your terms—harden the edges between them.

The Diminished seems less amenable to cuts unless it is by cutting longer quotes. Their 'diminishment' needs to be harder edged than the disturbed. Alternatively, cutting the whole 'diminished' section and including it in the Stress chapter might be easier to retain 'diminishmentality'.

(e-mail from Bob, 19 January 1997)

Support

The following strategies are evident:

- 'Relaying', or 'handing on', as in a relay race, with the runner handing on the baton to the person doing the next stage. This conveys the sense of sustained flat-out development of the project as a whole, but with points of individual relief following a burst of effort. As individual writers, we proceed in fits, starts, and stops. The 'fit'—the product of some inspiration—takes us so far and no further, when we are forced to stop, and seek a new start in the next draft in a few weeks time, after we have digested the first attempt, studied more literature perhaps, and come up with some new ideas. In teamwork, we can economise on this process to some extent by handing on a draft we have done to the team to do that kind of in-filling and developmental work, and to sustain inspiration ('Sorry if I'm not being much help but I've puzzled over it for some time and got nowhere really. Some responses to draft four—kicked back up field rather than safely and progressively in to touch perhaps. Took an hour off to watch the Leicester v.Toulouse match on Saturday. Very impressive').
- 'Portioning', that is dividing up tasks among the team. This can operate in a number of ways. An individual can be working on one section of material, while others work on others; one may send part of some material through to the rest of the team for evaluation, while continuing to work on others to bring them to the same level
- 'Sounding'. An individual puts some suggestions to the team, perhaps an outline of how some task is to be approached, and invites responses before making a full commitment to the task. The task can then be approached with a greater degree of security, and perhaps with some refinement to the ideas proposed—part way already to the next draft:

  Which categories need more data added from more people?
  Which categories need more work on in terms of defining their characteristics?
  What should I concentrate on next as a priority?
  Is it looking coherent yet?
  Have we establised the dilemma, tension, constraints distinctions?
- Encouraging. As in the relay race where it is customary for the other members of the team to encourage the one running their leg, so in writing. Encouragement is given

  in words ('This is excellent and done so quickly')
  by offering to take over some of the burden ('I'll have a go at 1, 2 and 3')
  by promptness of response *(passim)*

- Humanising. Writing is hard, and often stressful, work, especially if up against deadlines. Occasionaly, the messages remind the team that there is another life outside the book and this particular chapter, as in the reference to rugby above.
- Shared involvement. Members were brought into the process of analysis and provided with access and insight into the ways others were working with the data, One member felt that this was more comfortable than in a face-to-face situation in that it gave him the opportunity to read, reflect, think, respond—yet at the same time there was the sense of urgency and immediacy created by the context. Further, more face-to-face meetings were impractical—members of the team lived a long way from each other, and were engaged in other project activities. At the same time, the separation was balanced by the strong connections among team members and the occasional face-to-face meeting.

Sustained impetus

All our papers go through a number of drafts, as many as nine or ten or even more, starting perhaps from some sketchy notes or extended memo, then developing and refining arguments, integrating related literature, reorganising, and editing and re-editing. This particular chapter was a key one in the book and it had to be written quickly. We hid already had one two-month extension on the book contract, being preoccupied with other chapters. Now, however, having worked our way clear of tie incubus of major problems in other chapters (though editing and refining these still continued), it suddenly 'took off'. It went through nine drafts in two months. This is not to say that the chapter would not have been better had we had more time. There is a point in having 'gestation periods' between drafts, during which interaction takes place with others and with literature, old thoughts become reflected upon and new ones arise. But we did not have that luxury. In the event, we tried to make a virtue of the quick turn-rounds, in that, being able to keep the project in the forefront of our minds from beginning to end, no time was wasted in having to refamiliarise ourselves with the details of the case at the beginning of each draft; while the attentions of the team stimulated the reflection and interaction which normally occurs. Further one might claim that the way things were combined—e-mails, access to the data, team meetings, telephone conversations—provided a strong sense of sociology over technology, the latter being a vehicle for the strengthening of the ethnography, providing a wider access to conducting the analysis than if we were looking only at hard copy drafts.

Thus there was a sense of sustained continuity from inception to conclusion, until the construction of the chapter was resolved. This was much aided by modern technology. Drafts of papers and comments on them were instantly sent around members of the team, allowing swift exchanges, such that mental concentration on issues can be sustained, and an almost continuous discussion maintained on them throughout their development. There is no need for central

typing, correcting, re-typing and printing. There is a pressure of response, balanced by the knowledge that you are actually saving time by cutting through to the nub of issues, and the feeling that you are all making progress through some difficult problems. Further, home computers are no respecters of institutional opening and closing times, or of public holidays. There was consequently a blurring of the distinctions between work and non-work time, and public and private arenas. (Note that the same can apply in other areas of research. Bell [1977:59] remarks, 'Fieldwork…never stops. We could not disentangle work from non-work…Doing fieldwork is like being continually on stage'). The fact that the university closed down for a week over the Christmas period did not affect progress. We were needs-driven, rather than timetabled through an institutional calendar There is only you, the task and the computer. The only constraints are those that derive from human fallibility in, and aversion to, writing —and even those are eased by the team and the technology.

Style

We notice two particular aspects of style in our e-mail exchanges. One is the sense of wrestling, struggling, agonising, speculating, experimenting, grafting, consolidating. These are the very same kinds of emotions and actions we go through when writing individually, the fact that they are unarticulated contributing to the stress of the activity. Externalising and sharing our feelings in this way makes writing a little less of a stressful activity.

The second aspect is the economy of words used in the e-mails. There is a 'distanced directness'. In some ways, working by e-mail is a far more streamlined mode of operating than face-to-face meetings where there is invariably a great deal of exploration, experiment and embellishment—not always to the point. There are one or two asides in the e-mails, but for the most part they are succinct and to the point—qualities required for writing. The e-mail device forces us to concentrate on the matter in hand as closely as possible, saying what we have to say, with little of the human and relational interface that might blur these messages in face-to-face meetings.

Problems and solutions

There can be problems with both team and technology. Teamwork does not suit every purpose, every group, or every individual. Some attempts have foundered on the very basis of individual differences (see Platt 1976). It is expensive in terms of time and cost (Liggett *et al.* 1994), and continuous and harmonious communication is sometimes difficult to maintain. It is easy to see how responsibility might become shifted and not accepted among individuals in the group, and how a team might be used to divert accountability. In another context, team-working can be a managerial device for securing functional participation of members, similar to the 'contrived collegiality' that has been

observed in schools (Hargreaves 1994). Bell (1977) describes the tensions, conflicts, frustrations, stress, mistrust and acrimony that can arise from an ill assorted, 'contrived' team. There might be exploitation of those with less power, who may do more of their fair share of the work but receive less of the credit and benefit. There might be divided loyalties to the team's concerns, and different career projections which could affect those loyalties. There could be personal problems among team members, clashes of temperament, different competencies, varying paradigmatic and theoretical allegiances, all leading to counter-productive fights and struggles over whose view prevails. Some might feel that teamwork stifles their individuality and originality, and is against the very spirit of ethnography (Beidelman 1974). As Ellen (1984:208) remarks, 'The fieldworker who regards the discipline of social anthropology as akin to the art of the novelist is likely to find the presence of other researchers distracting and irrelevant'. With the 'postmodernist turn' (Tyler 1986) we might expect more qualitative researchers to be of this view. Questions of team size are also relevant. Ellen (1984:210) notes considerable logistical, organisational and intellectual problems with teams larger than two, and that 'the degree of personal commitment of the lone anthropologist is likely to be much greater than that of an anthropologist…who is the member of a large fieldwork team' (98). Interdisciplinary teams 'can provide unrivalled breadth and depth of authoritative data, but often lack theoretical impulse and analytical focus' (212).

Clearly, the composition of research teams and the relationships among their members are crucial. Despite the general 'multiplier effect', they might also represent constraint for certain individuals, rather than liberation. The group itself might set up its own constraining parameters, beyond which it becomes difficult to move due to the volume of work generated—a victim of its own success. Democratic procedures and a respect for individuals—and ensuring opportunities for purely individual advancement and products would seem indicated, to go side-by-side with the various kinds of teamwork we have identified here. Questions of balance have to be borne in mind. To what extent, for example, was our team initially de-feminised? To what extent is it deracialised? A research team cannot represent every constituency—but it can be reflective of its composition, and aware of the implications.

Liggett *et al.* (1994:81) refer to a 'common bond' or 'mindset' among their core team, which, despite their varied perspectives, sustained a collective commitment to their study and ensured a 'common framework' in presenting their work to others. Ely *et al.* (1997) go so far as to claim that they 'write as a team and often think as a team' (1), and that their writing demands 'more we-ness and less I-ness' (3). We adhere to the former, rather than the latter position. There has been little 'writing as a team' as such among us. Rather, the joint preparation of material usually takes the form of somebody taking the main responsibility for it, with others making comments and contributions. But we do have a 'common framework', consisting of complementary theoretical and methodological approaches, the use of similar concepts in our work, and the

addressing of similar issues. The application of this framework has an integrating effect, and adds more depth to individual work. We have our differences, but these complement rather than disrupt, broadening perspectives, checking and balancing. The pains and pleasures of writing, the demands and pressures of preparing, presenting and defending papers at conferences and symposia, have cemented relationships within our team, developing a team spirit marked by mutual trust and collegiality. The serious intent of matters is also cushioned by the general good humour shared by team members. A few jokes along the way not only help us through long meetings, but also make individuals feel easier in situations that might otherwise be threatening to them. It is well known, also, that humour promotes group solidarity (see for example Mealyea 1989). As a significant feature of the group's culture, humour acts as a humanising and binding force, reminding us that people, and the bonds between them, are more important than abstract issues (Woods 1990). In several ways, therefore, the team helps to counteract the traditional loneliness of the long-distance ethnographer.

Many of the problems some research teams have experienced in the past appear to have arisen from the undemocratic nature of the relationships among members of the team (Bell 1977; Platt 1976; Porter 1994). Platt (1976:76) notes that 'no team is completely non-hierarchical'. This is certainly true of ours—we hold posts of different status and permanence for a start. Beyond this, however, and especially in 'whole team' meetings, we operate in a democratic manner. This is aided by our 'immersion' in issues of common interest Olesen *et al.* use this concept in explaining how their team was able to raise the analysis to 'a higher order of abstraction or generality', as we feel we did with the 'restructuring' project:

> In part we could realise this because of our long mutual immersion in the study of self-care. That immersion honed our analytic skills, and also provided a safeguard against any team member, faculty or not, dominating the analysis or manipulating agreement; others simply knew too much and too well the subtleties of self-care ethnography readily to agree even on non-problematic categories or themes.
>
> (Olesen et al. 1994:126)

As for e-mail, like computer technology in general, it can have its drawbacks. There is a danger of loss of individuality, individual style, and the personal touch of ethnography. E-mail is not a recipe for all circumstances. We need to bear in mind Platt's (1976:91) criticisms of the use of the computer—'sophisticated solutions to problems we could hit with a hammer', and 'as the computer becomes fascinating, sociology becomes less fascinating'. In other words, we can become more involved with the means of communication than the communication itself.

Clearly, also, while we have celebrated the communicative capacity of e-mail, by the same token it can constitute an invasion of private life. E-mail can take

over one's life. There is a compulsion to look at it, and then to answer the messages immediately, even if schedules are full. You thus spend too long receiving and answering messages, and there are too many interruptions, splitting up the day, Some find its 'rapid response feel' a real problem, developing 'e-mail guilt syndrome' if they do not respond quickly. In short, e-mail can disrupt our carefully constructed and delicately balanced working routines and coping mechanisms. One colleague reported how, on returning from a spell of study leave, he found over five hundred e-mail messages on his computer. His method of handling these was simple—he deleted them at the touch of a button, a master stroke which enabled him to get on with more pressing matters.

All this indicates the need to establish protocols before one starts, and to situate the e-mail resource amongst the other resources and responsibilities of individual members of the team. Success has probably a great deal to do with size of the team and relationships among them. There needs to be agreement about rates of exchange, priorities of task, working hours, nature of the exchanges, and nature of team involvement. In this way, one can control the resource, rather than becoming controlled by it.

Chapter 7
Writing for publication

Research needs to be disseminated, and the main avenue for this is through publication. There is increased pressure on academics to publish these days because of the 'Research Assessment Exercise' (RAE) which determines research funding for institutions, and therefore jobs, status and research careers. There are fears that while this might increase the quantity of published work, it might decrease the quality. It is too early as yet to say what the results of the exercise are in this respect. But we do need to be aware of the dangers. Research -and that invariably means publishing—is part of an academic's job, and, if done well, one of the most rewarding, since it means that your work is esteemed and that it will reach a wider audience. If done badly, however, it can be savaged by your peers in reviews, and/or moulder on library bookshelves for evermore. The two main routes for publication of research are through academic journals or via books. This chapter considers some of the issues involved in each of these.

ACADEMIC JOURNALS

Weiner (1998:4) reports the role of academic journals as being to

- provide a means of providing up-to-date thinking and current research at the cutting edge in a particular discipline…
- challenge entrenched assumptions, encourage divergent thinking and develop a critical approach to the establishment…
- exchange information, provide work which can be used for teaching and learning, showcase high quality work, offer an outlet for publication and dissemination, and act as a forum for campaigning on important issues.

Given this, what are the considerations when preparing material for submission to a journal?

Know your own product

You must have something worth publishing. Is it suitable for an academic journal? Criteria would include high academic content, involving a contribution

to knowledge—which can be in research findings, research methods or an original review of the literature. It might show a theoretical advance, an unusual approach, cast new light on a field of research, or make a distinctive contribution to a current debate. Book chapters, though in fact they may turn out to be better, are rated below journal articles in academic circles, since most of the latter are subject to a strict form of evaluation by one's peers, usually people who are chosen by editors as experts in the subject area concerned. There is no better preparation than studying the journals to which your research is relevant to get the 'feel' of an academic article. So it would be useful if you had already sought the views of others on your paper. Some may advise 'this is a journal article', and say how it might be enhanced as such. Watch out for 'calls for papers' for special issues of journals, which most have from time to time. If an issue is to be in your area, it increases the chances of your article being accepted on the grounds of 'suitability', though all other criteria still have to be met.

All theses of master's level and above should contain at least one potential article. After all, the main criterion in their assessment is 'making an original contribution to knowledge'. It might be based on a particularly exciting chapter, or a combination of chapters representing the core of the argument. I often advise my students to construct a paper on their whole thesis, primarily as an aid to integrating the thought behind the whole of the work, but also as a prospective journal article. Such a paper adds to the thesis in that it reveals the 'theoretical spine' of the work. It captures the essence of it in a single article, while thesis chapters are filled out with data and extensive references.

The same applies to any comparable piece of research. For example, if the main product is to be a book, there may still be an article there which encapsulates the theoretical line in a tighter form, and which stands to reach a different audience. Two of my recent books and a coauthored one have been condensed in this way (Woods 1993a, 1995; Jeffrey and Woods 1998; the articles are, respectively, Woods 1993b, 1994a; Woods and Jeffrey 1998). As Laurel Richardson (1990:54) notes, 'It is usually not until you have finished writing a book that you have digested, expanded, and theorised your work sufficiently to be able to compress it or reframe it for submission to a major social science journal'. Note that where you use substantial amounts of the same material in more than one publication, albeit in a re-worked form, it is customary to ask permission from the original publisher. This is usually freely given.

There are also what I call 'spin-offs'—papers developed from quality material which cannot, for reasons of space and/or coherence, be worked into the main means of dissemination, but which have enough substance, coherence and relevance to make an article. Thus, in the course of the 'creative teaching' research, while the main focus was on teachers and teaching, we accumulated a great deal of material on students. Opportunities arose to publish articles on these, through invitations to contribute first to a conference, and second to a book on pupils (Woods 1994b; Jeffrey and Woods 1997). Such invitations might suggest ways to present your work which have not yet occurred to you, and these

in turn might lead to new research. These pupil papers, for example, fed into the planning of a new research project on 'creative learning'. Writing up in this sense is more of a process than an end point. Thus the file on the research should never be closed, as you don't know what further opportunities might occur. Furthermore, the thought and organisation that goes into writing up is not just retrospective, but can inform one's plans for the future.

A particular kind of spin-off is one that might arise from adversity. Everything that happens during a research project has potential relevance. If things do not go well for you during your research, it is a good idea to analyse the reasons; the results may be of interest to others. Geoff Troman (1996) for example, encountered difficulty gaining access to a school for his Ph.D. research, and used up valuable time in the attempt. But he turned his experience to good account by writing an article in which he analysed his experiences within the context of sociopolitical trends in recent years and their effect on schools. The article was duly published in the *British Educational Research Journal*—and made a useful contribution to his thesis. This kind of reflexiveness—on the problems of access —is invaluable methodologically and also from a knowledge point of view, in this case providing a sociological analysis of the situation giving rise to the problem. I never throw research materials away, however irrelevant or useless they may seem at the time. All data is capital and should be stored, since:

- There might come a time when you are invited to reflect on your past research experiences (such invitations led to Measor and Woods 1991; Woods 1998).
- You might wish to revise your first analysis in the light of later thinking and research and others' comments. Thus I took the opportunity to review some of the data in The Divided School' (1979) in a later article (Woods 1989).
- It might come in useful as comparative material to later research.
- It might provide part of a 'composite' article—one drawing on material from a number of other projects, possibly others as well as your own. Thus I drew on data from a number of my past researches, some published, some unpublished, in composing the article 'Coping at school through humour', published in the *British Journal of Sociology of Education* (1983). Looking back over these studies together, I saw common themes amongst them and new opportunities for theoretical development. Similarly, there might be composite articles which focus on methodology (such as 'New developments in action research'), a particular approach ('A postmodernist approach to educational study') or a review of the literature ('Educational ethnography in Britain').

Know your journal

> The form of academic literacy required by journals is not neutral.
>
> (Weiner 1998:17)

Considerations here include:

- Is the journal suitable in terms of its usual content? Has it published articles before in the general area of your research and method? It is not much use submitting an article on quantitative research to the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* or a highly theoretical paper with no clear practical applications to 'The British *Journal of Inservice Education*' (see Noble 1989 on this kind of mismatching). And if you have been involved in a particular form of presentation, such as experimental writing, for the best chance of publication you must seek out journals where that seems welcomed (at the moment, in this particular case, American journals such as *Qualitative Sociology, The Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, Sociological Quarterly,* and *Symbolic Interaction*). Your article might refer to articles or to discussions or debates that have appeared in a particular journal. Most journals have clearly defined areas—such as gender, educational policy, comparative education, special education—though some have more general fields, such as *The British Educational Research Journal.* What guidance do the editors give? Most specify the criteria inside the front or back cover of the journal—empirical research, theoretical discussion, methodological debate, disciplinary approach—in what areas and in what format, under which they invite submissions. Some write introductions to each issue (as in *Research Papers in Education*). Some write articles about their editorial experiences (e.g. Sherman 1993; Donmoyer 1996). Most are keen to encourage new authors. Some editors have difficulty finding papers of sufficient relevance and quality and, canvass submissions, though others are over-subscribed. You could be reasonably confident about getting a quick and sympathetic judgement from the former, which unfortunately is not true of all journals.
- Is it suitable in terms of status? Journals vary considerably in this respect. In general, the higher the status, the more stringent the scrutiny, and thus the more difficult it is to have an article accepted—though if it is, the kudos is commensurate. Refereed journals are considered more highly than non-refereed ones, but even among those there are big differences. The highest status journals are the leaders in their particular field, for example *The British Journal of Sociology of Education, The British Journal of Educational Psychology, The British Journal of Sociology.* At the other end, there are journals which seek shorter articles, perhaps of a less theoretical and more immediately practical nature (such as *English in Education,* Topic, *Educational Action Research*). Included here are the educational press, such as the *Times Educational Supplement, Education Guardian,* and *Education.* Most journals lie between these two extremes. For further reflections on targeting journals, see Day (1996),
- What are the refereeing practices of the journal? You can obtain this information by writing to the editor. A typical checklist sent to reviewers is given in Figure 7.1.

Some recommend tailoring your material towards a specific journal, rather than writing an article first and then looking around for a suitable journal. Walford (1998) relates how, in one particular project, he knew from the beginning that he wanted to publish some academic articles, and then base a book around them. As the research progressed, he 'divided the various parts of the research into articles, each linked to a particular journal' (190). While this might indeed facilitate publication, one would have to take care that such a strategy did not have undue influence upon the research—a case of the media being mightier than the message.

The psychological set

If one's article is accepted, one might feel exhilaration. Invariably, however, even with experienced writers, the first response from the journal editors is not one of outright acceptance. Only 9 per cent of articles submitted to the *British Educational Research Journal (BERJ)* are accepted as they stand; 25 per cent are rejected; the rest are referred for revisions that range from minor to major. As in any form of writing, therefore, the writer's approach needs to be resolute and patient, ready for all kinds of comment, extensive or minimal, and particularly criticism which can be insightful, helpful and constructive, and/or sarcastic, devastating and destructive. The standard of refereeing ranges from excellent to abysmal. Even worse, perhaps, is hardly any comment at all apart from a one-or two-line judgement. Outright rejection, with no sympathetic or encouraging comments, is the most hurtful—as it is in failed research proposals. This can be profoundly depressing, representing the difference between the 'arrived academic' with an exciting future of a stream of articles, and the 'struggling applicant' with still a great deal of work to do before arrival. It is easy to get disheartened after a rejection. It is hugely disappointing, and can seem as if months of work have been wasted. You will want some evidence of worthiness from others, perhaps your colleagues, as encouragement to persevere, refining the article and trying elsewhere. Refereeing can take an age. BERJ currently has a year of stacked up articles. The International *Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* has accepted one of our articles but is unable to publish it for at least another year. This will be over two years after its initial submission, which entailed some very minor revisions, done within a week. You might ask, therefore, for an estimate when you submit the paper.

British Educational Research Journal

Editorial Team: Ian Stronach, Manchester Metropolitan University (Editor), Dave Hustler, Manchester Metropolitan University (Deputy Editor), Anne Edwards, University of Leeds (Deputy Editor). Editorial contact address for 1996–97: Didsbury School of Education, The Manchester Metropolitan University, 799 Wilmslow Road, Manchester M20 2RR. Tel: +44 (0) 161 247

2318 (Jean Davidson), Fax: +44 (0) 161 2476353, Email: I.M.Stronach@mmu.ac.uk

Notes for referees

Referees are asked to bear the following in mind when assessing papers for inclusion.

We want BERJ to represent the best of educational research, nationally and internationally, and so it is important to be rigorous and demanding.

Articles are welcomed on all kinds and aspects of educational research, and addressing any form of education, formal or informal.

It is the policy of the journal that articles should offer original insight in terms of theory, methodology or interpretation, and not be restricted to the mere reporting of results.

It is important that referees pay particular attention to the appropriateness, accuracy, consistency and accessibility of tabular data, and the specified referencing protocols.

We welcome original ways of presenting research findings, and support accessible, well-written accounts.

It is important that referees are decisive in their judgements of submissions.

In writing up their comments on articles submitted to the journal, referees are asked, *in a minimum of 250 words or so,* to address whatever is relevant in the following:

- offer a brief critical resume of theoretical, methodological, or substantive issues raised by the author;
- assess how adequately the research is located in terms of previous relevant research;
- make a reasoned appraisal of the overall quality of the submission in terms of its excellence, contribution to knowledge, or originality;
- provide feedback useful to the author (a) for resubmission (b) more generally in terms of the further development of the research. It is helpful in the resubmission process if specific numbered points are made by referees and addressed by authors;
- indicate where appropriate any limitations on their ability to comment.

We also expect referees to be able to report on submissions within a three week period. It is important that these deadlines are respected. In future, articles published in BERJ will include information on ‘date received’/‘date resubmitted’/‘date finally accepted’ and we do not wish to exhibit unprofessional delays between receipt and acceptance/ resubmission/rejection.

Figure 7.1 BERJ’s notes for referees

Meanwhile, you will be constructing other papers. You might develop some contingency plans for the journal article, so that all is not wasted. There are

alternative uses to which it could be put, and which might yield further useful feedback—a conference paper, a chapter in a book, a teaching document—or you may have a shortlist of journals. If you are convinced that you have a quality product, you should leave no stone unturned. I submitted one of my articles, Towards a theory of aesthetic learning' (1993c) to the journal *Research Papers in Education.* Six months later I received a cursory note from the editor, without any referees' comments, saying that it was not considered 'suitable'. They might have given me some comments, but the judgement was probably sound. I had never seen an article in RPE anything like the one I had submitted -so I had not taken my own advice offered above. I am on the reviewing panel of RPE, and thought it would be rather nice to submit an article to them. Clearly, there is no room for sentiment. I then sent the paper to an American journal, *Aesthetic Education,* which at least from its title, was highly appropriate. I was not too sure, however, about the style of articles in past numbers, what one might term the 'discourse' of the journal. In due course, I received a reply, again devoid of referees' comments, saying they would be prepared to publish a shortened account in their 'Research reports' section. I was not happy with this, as I felt the article was quite tightly constructed, and would forsake some quality in any abbreviation, so sent it off, again unchanged, to *Educational Studies,* who accepted it as it stood within a matter of weeks. I have to admit that the article was inappropriate for both the first two journals, but sits quite happily in the third. I might have saved myself, and the editors of the first two journals, time and effort if I had studied the suitability of the journals a little more closely in the first place.

Strategies

There might be hundreds of journals in your area of research. Shortlist those that look as if they might be suitable, then scrutinise some recent numbers for content and discourse. Seek advice from experienced academics in your field. It is essential to study the criteria a journal specifies for submitted articles, and its 'house style'. 'Notes for contributors' give the optimum dimensions and format of the article, and guidance on how it should be submitted. These should be followed to the letter, otherwise your article in most cases will not be considered. Often, but not always, there is a note about content. Where none is given, look through recent editions of the journal to get a 'feel' of the subject areas and discourse. Presentation should be meticulous—clearly written, no or very few mistakes (grammar, spelling, typographical), well set out and printed. Sloppy presentation usually means poor content and is very irritating to referees.

It is a good idea to get your article assessed by others first, if possible. Start with friends, who can be relied upon to give it a sympathetic read; then other colleagues who might have an interest in it for one reason or another. When you are confident the paper is in reasonable shape, you might use it to lead a seminar or present at a conference, where further feedback would be forthcoming. At

some point, if you were brave enough, it would be interesting to test it out on a known opponent of the stance you are taking—as long as it were somebody who would not simply condemn it out of hand. The range of viewpoints that are brought to bear broadens your own outlook. You see things that you would not otherwise have noticed.

Once it is submitted, you can continue to work on the article, looking out for new relevant literature and discussion. A paper is only finished when the final copy is handed over and any queries on it have been answered. You might well anticipate some of the referees' comments, and thus be better equipped to respond to them. It is also a good idea to begin fashioning a new paper, if your material justifies it. Since it might take years from inception to acceptance of a paper for publication, it is useful to have more than one at different stages of completion.

I advise my postgraduate students to regard their oral examinations as seminar situations, and to bear in mind that they know far more about their theses than their examiners. The same counsel applies to journal articles. In a situation where you receive a reply from an editor saying they are prepared to reconsider the article if you take the referees' comments fully into account, it is necessary to engage with referees' comments, not just reject or accept them without question. The important thing is that you consider them carefully and give a reasoned response to all the points made. The main points deserve a comment each, but some you might be able to deal with collectively ('I accept all the other points'). Some things you are urged to do you might have good reason for not doing—perhaps something else more valuable might be lost, or it might lend a different slant to the argument from that you wish to make, or you might not consider it relevant. Sometimes, referees' comments contradict one another, but both can be of use in re-drafting. For example, one may prefer a different explanation to that being advanced, while another very much likes it. Giving reasons why you prefer one to the other can only strengthen the paper.

Assistance

Though your article might have your name only on it, invariably a number of other people will have contributed to it—friends, colleagues, referees.

Some of the most helpful comments I have received have been from journal editors. My first journal article was in the *British Journal of Sociology.* The article I submitted was hopelessly over-length (a common failing in qualitative research)—some 12,000 words compared to a recommended 7,000—and might have been rejected on these grounds alone. But the editor was gently encouraging, feeling that the article would actually be improved by some abbreviation. Though at first disappointed that I had to lose some of my 'Valuable' material, I confronted the pain barrier once more and cut the article back to the required length. Once having gone through this discipline, I had to admit that the article was better—much tighter in argument, much more focused

on the issues, the least relevant data trimmed, more succinct expression, tangential material excised.

I learnt other valuable lessons from Gabriel Chanan, coeditor of a book published by the NFER, which included one of my early articles. Gabriel took a lot of trouble over my ill formed article, and made many detailed suggestions on the manuscript—clarifying points, supplying alternative ways of saying things, linking sentences, requesting explanations, pointing out ambiguities—taking care to say that they were suggestions, and that the final decision in all instances was my own. These were the first two articles of mine that were published. I learnt a great deal from the people involved in the process, and this equipped me well for writing future articles.

If you receive an outright rejection, all might not be lost. Most editors try to be helpful, and act in the spirit of all being members of an academic community rather than simply of the interests of their own journal. Sometimes a more suitable journal is recommended, or some hints might be given on how the paper might be improved. If no comments are sent, write back and request some, pointing out that they will help you. Ponder on comments that are sent. More often than not these will be helpful and to the point, concerned with quality of data and argument, knowledge of the literature, research methods, presentation and organisation, and relevance to the journal. Sometimes, however, they may be more contentious—ideological ('not Marxist enough' or 'too Marxist'); epistemological or paradigmatic ('too modernist'); atheoretical ('what use is this?'); or idiosyncratic and peremptory ('I just don't think this article should be published'). It is useful to identify the nature of comments, and of your own product, so that you can defend it against them.

A selection of critical comments on journal submissions

The following extracts from reports convey the main faults I have found with recent articles submitted to journals sent to me in recent years to referee. Again, they mostly recall points made earlier.

Inadequate methods or explanation of methods

> 'It is based on a very small, and rather unbalanced, sample—only 20 per cent by my reckoning followed through to the classroom observation. This, then, may be a self-selected sample given to a certain mode of response by their willingness to contribute. Yet the authors still claim their sample to be representative of a whole population'.
>
> 'We do not know how long the interviews lasted, where they took place, how they were recorded. There are no extracts given from these interviews. They are treated quantitatively in the analysis.

Similarly, the observations are claimed to be "naturalistic", but we do not know how long the researchers spent in the school, how many lessons were observed, and how observations were noted. There seems to be an assumption that one can walk into a lesson and observe "natural" behaviour. Some qualitative researchers spend years gaining entry, in the interests of penetrating the outer layers of reality to the innermost meanings. There is no attempt to do that here. Validity therefore is suspect'.

'The main problem is that the research does not seem to match the subject, i.e. "active learning". The research methods employed are too crude and closed for ascertaining views and feelings, and there is questionable validity and reliability. For example, students might be expected to rate themselves highly, but did they really? What meanings were being attached to the questions that were being put to them, and how are we to frame their answers? The paper is unidimensional, where it needs to be multiperspectival The selection of the sample is not explained, nor what is meant by "exemplary". The main problem is that the research questions are too huge for such a small scale study'.

Limited or misused data

The data seem thin. No examples are given in the first category. Where examples are given, we are rarely given the questions that were asked to elicit the response, so context is lacking. Examples consist of little more than one or two sentences—not much to go on in considering intellectual development. We know nothing about the people making the statements (age? sex? position? etc.)'.

'Data are limited, and appear to be based on two interviews which is presented as "in depth" research. Not enough is known about the two subjects. There is no background, nothing of their previous lives —life histories would have helped here. The literature shows that clues to teachers' careers often reside in these earlier periods'.

'…the failure to link long extracts of transcript adequately to the text (the assumption presumably being that they almost speak for themselves), making unwarranted assumptions (such as that a kind of "progressive pedagogy is most conducive to equity education")'.

Inadequate theory

'The paper is weak theoretically. Presumably the subject is teacher culture, but there is no discussion of this concept. There is no recognition that there can be a dialectical relation with a culture,

whereby individuals both contribute to and draw from a culture, and that it is a dynamic, living, processual thing. The data might contribute to an interesting discussion along these lines, but fall well short of it'.

'Much more definitional work needs to be done. For example, it is not clear what is meant by "structure". In one place, social class is offered as an example, elsewhere a school or university; and later, reference is made to "macro". There seems some conceptual confusion here'.

'"Analytical dualism" is held out as a solution to the structure/agency problem, but we are told very little about it, and its application to the case study is obscure and superficial'.

Inappropriate journal

'I wondered if the article would be more appropriate in a psychology journal, such as *BJEdPsych.* It bears on both disciplines, so is suitable for either, but I would recommend a submission to a psychology journal if no place is found for it in BJSE'.

'Alternatively, the author might prefer to try a journal like *School Organisa*tion, or *School Effectiveness.* In some ways, the character of the article may be more suited to those'.

'It is, perhaps, more suitable for a journal that is more immediately practically based, such as the *British Journal of Inservice Education, or Educational Action Research*'.

Presentation and style

'The tone adopted is one of exhortation rather than argument and analysis'.

'Inadequate because of the verbose and highly repetitive style in which it is written (which includes making simple points sound very complicated), the use of labels (such as "conservative" and "progressive") in spite of the argument for complexity and contradiction'.

'There may well be a worthy article here, but it needs a lot more work clarifying and sharpening the argument, editing out the clutter, making more of the evidence'.

'Organisation of the article is also suspect. There is no sectioning, with clearly identified themes, which increases the sense of it being rather a rambling discourse. I was left wondering what the aims of the article were, and what the author was trying to achieve. The abstract was no help in this respect'.

'It all seems rather superficial, rising little above elementary textbook level in places—see sections 2 and 3 for example on "teachers' lives" and "theories of intellectual development". These are central to the issue, and need examining in much more detail'.

'Lucidity is lost in places (e.g. mid. p. 8), there are non sequiturs (e.g. p. 9); instances of bad fit (e.g. between claim made and supporting quote e.g. p. 9); exaggerated claims (e.g. pp. 8, 9, 10, 11, 13); key matters unexplained (e.g. "exclusions"); and undue speculation (e.g. p. 14). It is not clear that there are two "systematic" discourses operating in the school. Even the dominant discourse has not been adequately documented'.

Unacknowledged bias

Ideological bias

'A pervasive problem is "hegemonic masculinity"—the author takes this for granted, so it is not explained, nor argued for. If you accept this as a given, then there may be fewer problems with the paper. Often, no

evidence is presented to support an assertion. I found myself writing "How do you know?" and "Evidence?" in the margins. There are unqualified claims from the literature. Alternative explanations are not considered. Some examples given do not clearly and unequivocally support the argument, and some just do not fit the claim made. It is very speculative in parts'.

Author dominance

'We need much more of the teachers' voices, more extended quotations from them, so that they speak through the material. Here, they appear to be stifled, and very much under the control of the author'.

Selective data to fit a favoured theory

'Do we get a complete enough picture of the children's mental processes? Might there be other factors unconnected to social class operating? What are the criteria for testing this argument? To what extent is the theory driving the data collection and analysis? To what extent can the theory be said to be "grounded" in the data? Are there other theories that might be brought to bear on the data, possibly at

odds with those that have been chosen? The reader is not given enough to formulate an independent judgement, nor to assess the strength of the argument. We are forced to go along the lines the author takes us. I want to know more about these children and their discourse -I want to widen the framework of the debate'.

Inadequate knowledge

'The presentation is too simplistic in the light of the existing literature on pupil perspectives on effective teachers and teaching. Much of the conclusions here have been well established in British, American, Australian and French studies, and more sophisticated discussions made of their interrelationships. None of this work is referred to in the article'.

'A fair range of literature is cited, but it is dealt with in a very shallow way, usually by mentioning a single point, which only begs a range of other questions—for example, they say "evidence from a similar study supported our decision to consider our sample as representative". They do not say what this "evidence" is. To this reader, this only demonstrates the inadequacy of the other study. There is no critical engagement with this literature, nor does it always seem to support the point being made (e.g. p. 15, studies are quoted about first year teachers when the sample is third year); nor do they always link together, being presented in list-like fashion, as in the introduction'.

'There is a wealth of sociological and educational literature that would appear to be relevant to points made. For example, on pp. 5–6, the author seems to be talking about "role", though this is not mentioned, but leaves out of account the notions of "role style" and "role modification", and of course the huge literature on the subject. Instead, we are offered a lesson in very elementary sociology. The ensuing discussion leaves out of account the growing literature on implementation theory and the equally growing literature on teachers' adaptations to recent government measures'.

'Some of the conclusions are not new (e.g. several of the points made on pp. 17–18 are sociological clichés)…. It is reporting on a worthy project which no doubt has much to contribute. But this article does not do it beyond making a strong central point which in itself is not original'.

'One of the continuing problems in sociology is that some favour structure in their approach, others agency. There are few that consider the two together. I was hoping that this article might provide a few pointers, but it does not even get as far as clearing some of the

introductions out of the way. Consequently it is a little reminiscent of some of the writing of the early 1970s that came out of the counter-productive positivism v. non-positivism divide'.

'There is more on pressures on teachers than on solutions, and these, as presented, are not news. Nor is their desire for practical help'.

Limited analysis

'This article is almost purely descriptive. There is some primary analysis, organising data into categories, but it is limited, and it is not clear where the categories come from (author or subjects?)'.

Inadequate discussion

'There are dubious arguments, elementary arguments, and unconvincing arguments'.

'There is no consideration of gender, personality, or "side-bets", all of which have been shown by other studies to be powerful factors in teacher careers'.

'Much of the data is unidimensional and some of it is superficial. What lies behind the level that is presented? There are examples in some of the literature above. Werthman and Marsh *et al.* explored the rules underlying the pupil perceptions; Gannaway teased out the interconnections among his (similar) categories, showing a flow-chart of priorities; Turner found, in his case, that students' definitions of "interesting" were related to the marketability of subjects and teachers' ability to deliver the goods'.

'There is a major sociological faux pas on p. 10 where it is asserted that "most staff operated rather childishly". A sociologist would treat this, not as a fact in itself, but as an unusual and surprising matter in need of explanation. In skirting over such points, the article is resonant of some of the "effectiveness" literature of which it is so critical'.

'The recommendation is unrealistic, with no recognition of the politics involved in these matters'.

Dubious ethics

'I am concerned about the ethics of the approach, i.e. asking pupils directly about their teachers, and their problems in keeping order.

> The possibility is that the research might compound their difficulties by cementing pupils' possibly ill-formed views of teachers who have more difficulty than others. The problem is not got round by not referring to "efficiency" or "inefficiency". The research questioning is still cast in terms of particular teachers, moreover in polarised form —good or bad. An alternative approach would be to try to identify components of styles that might apply variously to some degree or other to all teachers, depending on factors and circumstances to be identified. Did the teachers know they were being discussed in this way? What were the terms of the contract, written or unwritten, between researchers and school? Has any feedback been given to the teachers, if so, with what result?'

A supported submission

Let us conclude with a positive report on an unusual article:

> 'I enjoyed this paper.
>
> It is a product of the "literary turn", reflective, poetic, exploring feelings and relationships, and mode of representation. The strength is in the expression. This is so easy to overdo or misjudge, and requires just as much skill, though of a different kind, as in more scientific accounts. The author avoids mawkishness, and shows a depth of feeling, and a sure artistic touch in conveying it to the reader.
>
> Some may consider the paper a self-indulgence, and in a way it is. But the point is, does it have relevance for others, and does it deal with a worthy subject? I would say incontrovertibly "yes", since the "caring" element in teaching (associated with Noddings, and Nias, for example) has become submerged beneath the welter of research activity that is subsumed within the current dominant managerialist, marketisation and technicisation trend, and needs reviving. It is a reminder that, in among all the instrumental activities, there is something more at the heart of teaching.
>
> The paper must meet certain criteria of quality. Among these, depth of insight and understanding, the appositeness of representation, and the power of the account to "move" the reader are important, and I think the author meets these.
>
> If it has a weakness, it is more about the author's family life than about school and relationships among teachers and students. If it is thought unsuitable for TAT, the author might try one of the American based qualitative journals that have trailed the way with this kind of article (such as *Symbolic Interaction, QSE, Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *Qualitative Inquiry).* Also, the author states that he does not like schools, but it is not altogether clear why, and it also raises the question of whether schools in his preferred image are possible. How are we to educate our

young? How are we to handle the many material considerations? Advocating the power and practice of love can also have its dangers in the education of the young.

Even so, I would recommend publication. It is a refreshing approach, and I am sure would create a lot of interest and debate'.

BOOKS

Much of the above applies also to the writing of the chapters of a book. In this section I shall therefore consider matters relating to the book as a whole.

Background knowledge

Do you have the material for a book? Considerations include:

- Do you have enough material? A book can be the equivalent of 6–8 articles—a major enterprise.
- Substantial, original, high quality material. Origins might include a postgraduate thesis, a sustained research project, a course of teaching, a series of lectures, or a number of related articles that have already been published.
- Likely to be of wide interest. Publishers generally are not interested in theses as they stand because they are too academic and too specialist, and will not sell well. They might be on esoteric topics, and/or half the content might be taken up with introductory material on research design, methodology, theory and reviewing the literature. A book has to be marketable—a huge consideration. Books are unlike articles in this respect. Having said this, Ph.D.s often do contain books, and exceptionally good ones, unsurprisingly in view of the quality of the research. They have to be tailored to a different audience, condensing the introductory material into a single introductory chapter, and focusing on the major findings.
- Substantial and innovative experience in a particular area, for example, research methods.

Do you have appropriate knowledge of yourself? For example, do you have the time, resources and inspiration to write a book? It inevitably impinges on family and social life and on other areas of one's work.

Do you know your publisher? It is possible to publish a book oneself, but this is not usually recommended since it is costly, and also publishing houses have developed expertise in the production and especially marketing of books. So which publishers should you approach?

In the educational field in the UK, the leading publishers are generally regarded as being Routledge/Falmer Press, Open University Press, and Cassell. There are specialist publishers in particular areas, such as Multilingual Matters, Virago Press (women's studies) and Whurr (special needs). There are publishers

more exclusively interested in books that are of immediate practical value to teachers, such as Chapman (now part of Sage) and David Fulton. Nafferton Press has expanded in recent years and has a growing reputation in the educational field. There are those that will facilitate the publishing of your book with your help, such as Avebury (see Walford 1998).

It is as well to be aware of current trends in publishing. For example, at the time of writing most educational publishers are requiring more books of a practical nature, and being more wary of disciplinary books—for example, those that take a sociological view without drawing out the practical implications. This is quite a problem currently for the educational disciplines, since those working in these areas are averse to simply providing 'tips for teachers on how to teach the National Curriculum'. However, there are ways in which sociologists can lean in the direction of practical recommendations without losing sight of the basic discipline (see Chapter 4 for one such approach).

As a first step, you would need to write to the commissioning editor to see if they were interested in receiving a proposal from you. An alternative is to contact the general editor of a series of books if you see your topic fitting within that series. It would be a good idea to discuss the process, and the pleasures and pains involved, with colleagues who have experience of it. Watching the educational press and studying publishers' catalogues will also keep you informed of trends in publishing.

As in all things, it helps to have a measure of luck and being prepared to act on it. I was fortunate with my first book in being encouraged and assisted by an able and sympathetic editor at Routledge, who happened to be an ex-colleague -David Godwin. David used to work at the Open University, and on one of his re-visits urged me to put in a proposal. He continued to be very helpful throughout the project.

Should you have an agent? In principle, an agent should be able to help you first find a publisher, and then secure you a better deal. However, agents are unusual in academic publishing. Academic books on the whole simply do not make enough money to warrant or interest an agent. If your book is good enough you should be able to place it with one of the relatively small group of educational publishers, and it is fun negotiating the terms yourself—not that it makes a great deal of difference given the small sums involved (see below).

Preparing a proposal

As with a research proposal, it makes sense to spend some time over this. A contract may depend on it, but also it involves important and necessary planning. It forces you to think about aims, content, style, organisation and the logistics of producing a book. A publisher will usually specify the criteria they employ in judging a proposal (see the example given later), but they all revolve around the central point of 'will it sell?' For this, it needs to be of high quality, original, with no or few competitors, have a clearly defined audience, and promise to be a

product they can market at a reasonable price. If a commissioning editor likes the proposal, they will send it to a number of referees for comment. As with articles, responses can reflect a range of opinion. The proposal might be rejected if there is not a fair degree of support, but if there is some the editor might invite your reaction to the comments that have been made. Some of these might be critical but lead you to see new ways in which the book might be improved. Others might seem to be urging you to go in directions to which you are averse, requiring a different kind of book altogether. As with articles, I treat this as a seminar situation and engage with referees' comments in the spirit they were intended. As long as you meet all points reasonably, if you have reached this stage your proposal stands a good chance of being accepted.

At the end of this chapter, I give a sample proposal. It is not the only kind—I have seen much different and much shorter ones accepted. But it is a successful model I have worked with over the years.

Negotiating a contract

Harry Wolcott likes to write his book first before seeking a publisher, but I consider this is a risky business for most of us, if not Harry. I know of three people who did this and could not find a publisher. Writing a book is hard and time-consuming work, and it makes sense to seek whatever guarantees of publication may be on offer. Seeking a contract also forces you to think hard about the form and content of the book, its audience, and the style in which it will be written. Once a contract is secured, you can be reasonably sure that your book will be published as long as you meet the terms of the contract.

A contract is not so much, therefore, about the author maximising profit. Academics are not in the writing business for commercial reasons. One or two research books have become best sellers, but on the whole they are specialist items, many being acquired only by libraries. A standard print run in the UK is for 2,000 copies or less, and sales of 750–1,000 in the first year are considered good. Compare this with the 7,295 copies of the 1998 Booker Prize winner, *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, sold in one week in June 1998! So refrain from demanding half a million in advance, as Martin Amis did for one of his books, and don't plan to retire on the royalties you receive! Having said that, it makes sense to try to get the best terms you can. There is some good advice on negotiating contracts (see for example Caute and Graham 1983), so I just refer here to some basic points:

- A standard rate is 10 per cent of the published price of the book for each copy sold. Most publishers these days offer 10 per cent of the money they actually receive from sales, which of course is somewhat less. You might try for higher royalties as sales rise, say 10 per cent on the first 2,000, 12.5 per cent on the next 3,000, and 15 per cent thereafter. On the other hand, do be reasonable. Publishers' offers are guided by the marketing advice they receive,

and you may have to settle for less if you wish to see your book published. Well known, highly successful authors will command higher royalties. An unknown author with a risky manuscript (in marketing terms) might be offered less. Also, there are other considerations than royalties, such as the appearance of the book, marketing arrangements and relationships with the author. You can find out about these aspects by looking at books produced by the publisher and talking to some of their authors.
- Do try to secure an advance. Most publishers will agree to one, typically half on signing the contract, and half on acceptance of the delivered manuscript. This may help with some of the costs of preparation, but more important for me is that an advance signifies the publisher's commitment to the project.
- Do examine all the clauses of the contract. It might be difficult seeing your book turned into a film, or serialised on Radio 4 or in *Readers Digest*—but you never know which one of such scenarios might arise. Translation rights', for one, are quite important. A book can earn more from translation than in its original language, as, for one reason, it may not have as many direct competitors in the translated language. Try for 80 per cent in these clauses, and don't settle for less than 50 per cent.
- Try to get as many free copies of the book as you can. I usually ask for ten paperback and ten hardback.
- Allow yourself enough time to write the book. I have once or twice had to request a two-month extension because of unforeseen circumstances that arose. Publishers do not usually mind a short extension as long as they are given sufficient warning, but not deliverin g on time is technically a breach of contract. Publishers have their own schedules, deadlines, catalogues, lists, etc. The longer the delay, the more the possibility that publishers might reconsider producing the book.

Strategies

As with a Ph.D., writing a book is a huge project, and for me has to be tackled piece by piece, chapter by chapter, and not necessarily in the order in which they are to appear. One way is to write a series of journal articles first, then bring them together into a book (see Walford 1998). I did this with *The Divided School* (1979). Six of the ten chapters had been published in journals or collections of articles between 1975 and 1979. The book was a trimmed down version of the Ph.D., which also appeared in 1979. Some of the parts that were taken out, however, had appeared in Open University teaching material (Woods 1977). So *The Divided School* had had a thorough grounding in other outlets, and I wonder if it would have been written otherwise.

Once you have written one book, as with articles, you acquire a certain streetwise knowledge. It remains the hardest work as an academic that I have experienced, but at least you know what lies ahead and what has to be done, and can plan more securely within the frame of other responsibilities. I always like to

get some material ‘in the bank’, as it were, as soon as possible. This may be based on existing material. Of the rest, there may be some chapters that are essential and easier to write than others. I intersperse these with the essential harder chapters, leaving other chapters to the end. These may never get written. It is easy to overestimate what you can get into a book. Some chapters may have to be omitted, therefore, or substituted by new, exciting possibilities that may occur to you within the lengthy time period it usually takes to write a book. As with articles, you may also find the need to review the structure of the book as you get into the writing of it. The book proposal does not have to be strictly adhered to. I have not written one book that follows the proposal to the letter.

This does not mean that you cannot plan seriously from the beginning. I find it useful to allocate a number of words to each chapter, and to keep check of how many words I actually write. I can then see if I am likely to overshoot. In a standard book of 80,000 words there might be, say, seven chapters of 10,000 words each, with 10,000 left to cover introductory material and references. This is only a rough guide, since chapters may need to end up at variable length, but it helps to provide a measure of self-discipline. Thus, if my chapters begin to come out at 15,000—as they might do with large sections of transcript, for example—I might have to re-think, but not before I have done a thorough job of editing the chapter and ensuring that every word left in is absolutely necessary. Invariably this brings the wordage down significantly, and yields a much tighter chapter.

As stressed earlier, editing becomes the most important and most time-consuming activity. In general, the onus has always been on the author to present as accurate and complete a copy to the publisher as possible, in line with the house style. This is becoming even more essential. With my first book, I received valuable aid from an in-house editor, who made constructive comments on the submitted text, rather as Gabriel Chanan had for that early article. I even went to London to discuss some points with her. David Godwin also made some comments, including pointing out some potentially libellous material. Such a service today is a luxury. In fact, you may find yourself having to de-edit a manuscript after it has had the attention of an editor. Manuscripts are often sent out to independent copy-editors who format the material for the printer and check the references. They might pick up some errors, and ask for clarification of some points. Usually this job is professionally done and enhances the book. But some might make changes without alerting you. They might only be small matters of punctuation or a slight alteration of word, which nonetheless cause large changes of meaning. Especially in view of this, it is essential that you read the proofs with great care. This may be the nth time you have read your book and you may be becoming a little tired of it, but it is an essential task as it is the last opportunity to put things right. If necessary, demand to see a second set of proofs incorporating your corrections. Also, make sure to ask to see the publisher’s design for the front cover, and their blurb for the back cover. Publishers are usually cooperative over these matters and send them to you for approval as a matter of course. I have rejected one or two designs, but I did slip up over one

back cover blurb that was not sent to me, and this spoilt my pleasure at seeing the final product

Some examples

A publisher's book proposal guide



ROUTLEDGE
BOOK PROPOSAL GUIDE
EDUCATION

Routledge welcomes new book proposals. We would like a brief, jargon-free description of the book and the readership. Below is a list of points to be considered when preparing your book proposal.

Readership – Is the main market professional or academic?

Professional: Teachers/NQTs/Head teachers/Department heads/Policy-makers/Governors

Professional Development: INSET/NPQH/other

Student/academic: Trainee teachers/Undergrad/Postgrad/Research level

On which taught course would you expect it to be used? (approx. UK student numbers if known)

Existing books in the area – List and describe competing books (including publisher), how does your book compare?, what makes it different?

Background – Was the plan developed from your own teaching/research/workshops? If based on courses taught, please specify.

Soundbite – a short, descriptive paragraph which sums up the proposed book in non-jargon

Outline – This should include a list of contents, chapter headings and sub-headings, and working title. Chapter synopses and, if possible, some chapters in draft form

Length & Illustrations – Estimated length, estimated number of illustrations, line diagrams and other. Please include details of material to be included from other sources (material for which we will need to get permission from another author/publisher)

Features – Does the book have a **practical** aspect? Could the book be described as a *Handbook*, *Guide* or *How-to*. Will the book include features such as end-of-chapter summaries, suggestions for further reading or step-by-step advice?

What aspects of your proposal would you emphasise as being of most importance?

Author(s) – Include full name, position, address, telephone/fax. Brief details of other posts, degrees, relevant qualifications and affiliations. Publications – if books, please specify

Timetable – What would you regard as a realistic date for the completion of the entire manuscript?

Referees – Names and addresses of several people (including practitioners) whom you would regard as suitably qualified to read and comment on your proposal

Key figures – please list key figures in this area who would be sympathetic to your project (media figures/journalists/government ministers/ commentators etc.), whom we might approach for publicity purposes

Nina Stibbe	**Jude Bowen**
Commissioning Editor	*Editorial Assistant*
nstibbe@routledge.co.uk	*jbowen@routledge.co.uk*

Figure 7.2 **Routledge's book proposal guide for education titles**

A publisher's guide* to referees of *a book proposal



Guide to referees of a synopsis

The questions below have been selected for two purposes:

(a) To help us decide whether an Author is to be encouraged to proceed with this projected book—we hope to learn at this stage whether the project meets a need in the marketplace, and whether it is well-conceived.

(b) If the project is to be encouraged we would welcome your suggestions for any necessary revisions of structure, content or approach.

Organisation and content

1 Do you agree with the choice and weighting of topics?
2 Do you agree with the order in which the topics are treated?
3 Are any subjects or topics not covered which, in your opinion, form a necessary part of a book on this subject and with this proposed market?

4 Is there any material which you consider superfluous to the objectives of this project?

The market

1 To what groups of students could this book be recommended for purchase? (e.g. First year undergraduates, Universities and Polytechnics.)
2 What would be its importance to these students? (e.g. Main text, all first year; one of several texts, third year option course supplementary reading, library only.)
3 How widely is the subject taught?
4 What are the competing books? (Please quote the books you consider would be its principal competitors, with comments on them.)
5 What would you consider to be a reasonable price for the book?

Conclusion

Is this project, either in its present form or with the modifications suggested in your report, to be encouraged?

Figure 7.3 The Open University Press' guide for referees of book proposals

A specimen book proposal

Child-Meaningful Learning: The Experiences of Bilingual Children in the Early Years

A book proposal from Peter Woods, Mari Boyle and Nick Hubbard

Background

This book is based on original research material collected over the last two and a half years by sustained, in-depth participant observation in a primary school and its nursery unit, and in a contrasting nursery school. Both schools had high proportions of Punjabi-speaking children. The main aims of the research were to

1 Study the theory and practice of teachers' approaches to teaching young bilingual learners
2 Consider the meanings that the children attached to their learning
3 Consider the children within their own social frameworks
4 Make recommendations for future school policy and teaching practice

Key issues were:

- Access to the National Curriculum for bilingual pupils

- The principles that guide the teaching in the schools; how they relate to teachers' practice, and how that practice is experienced by the children
- Factors constraining the teachers' practice
- How young bilingual children accomplish the transition to institutional life in English society, and how they accommodate to the diverse cultures of their experience
- The relationship between bilingual children's home and school lives

The theoretical bases of the research were

Social Constructivism

This theory of learning derives from Vygotsky (1962) and has been developed by Bruner (1986) and others (Donaldson 1978; Edwards and Mercer 1987; Wood 1988; Mercer 1995). There is emphasis on the cultural and communicative aspects of the context in which children learn; on cooperation—with both teachers and other pupils; on negotiation with the teacher over learning tasks; on the teacher as facilitator who helps construct a 'scaffolding' for children's mental explorations; on the 'handover' of control of learning to pupils once this cognitive edifice is secure; and on the resulting 'ownership' of knowledge by the child. In primary schools this theory has largely displaced the 'child-centredness' associated with Piaget and the Plowden Report (1967). Yet, without appropriate 'conceptual and empirical testing', it is in danger of becoming the same kind of ideology—operating at the level of ideas rather than practice—as 'child-centredness' (Alexander 1984; 1992).

In our previous research, we have developed the related notion of 'creative teaching and learning' (Woods 1990; 1993; 1995; Woods and Jeffrey 1996). This features innovation (which refers to the teacher's powers of invention, or the child's learning something new), ownership

(of knowledge), control (of pedagogical or learning processes) and relevance (operating within a broad range of accepted social values while being attuned to pupil identities and cultures). The initiation of the young bilingual child into the world of school seemed to offer a stringent test of these criteria, while the theory in turn might prove fruitful for school policy and practice.

Intensification and coping

Any such recommendations for schools would have to take into account the constraints that currently operate on teachers. Prominent among these is the intensification of teachers' work.The theory of intensification (Apple 1986) derives from Larson's (1980) discussion of the proletarianisation of educated labour. As advanced capitalist economies seek to maintain and promote efficiency so the sphere of work narrows, high-level tasks become routinised and there is more subservience to the bureaucratic whole. At the chalk-face, there is more to do, including a proliferation of administrative and assessment tasks, less time to do it in, less time for re-skilling and for sociability, few opportunities for creative work, a diversification of responsibility, and a reduction in quality of service. As with the constructivist theory, however, the intensification theory requires opening up for empirical and theoretical inspection (see A.Hargreaves 1991).

We have done this through combining with it another theoretical area, that of 'coping strategies' (Woods 1979; Hargreaves 1984; Pollard 1982). This notion combines structure and agency, system and individual, constraints and creativity. Intensification implies an increase in the constraints, and greater pressure on the ability to cope, producing a range of reactions from stress and burn-out to personal adjustment and accommodation (Lacey 1977). The school of our research made an interesting test case for these theories.

Multiculturalism

This term, though still the preferred one within schools, has been somewhat discredited for failing to deliver equality of opportunity in relation to 'race', for promoting complacency, and for failing to acknowledge that the issue is a structural one, persistently reproduced by racism (see Stone 1981). Here, teachers who are sensitive to such criticisms are reaching toward new policies and strategies. They do not appear to be helped by the National Curriculum, which 'effectively marginalises community languages and mother tongues' (Reid 1992:18), and crowds the timetable with statutory subjects. How, then, do highly aware teachers promote mother-tongue teaching in such circumstances? How can bilingualism be seen and developed as a resource within the

context of the NC? How can the 'entitlement' implicit in the NC be made a reality for all children? Again, our schools made a critical case for testing the theoretical frameworks both of multiculturalism and of the NC. For example, if there were few opportunities for such activities, the argument for the NC being a centralising, intensifying, mono-ethnic instrument would be strengthened. Opinion, and the research evidence on the NC in this respect, is currently divided. On the one hand, it seems to be introducing more constraints (Broadfoot *et al.* 1991; Campbell *et al* 1991; Pollard 1991); on the other, there appear to some to be new opportunities (Webb 1990; HMI 1991; Wragg 1992). Our research contributes to that debate.

Relevance of the research and of the book

A number of factors make this subject of study a pressing current issue:

1 Primary school pedagogy has been a major concern for some time, but even more so since the Alexander, Rose and Woodhead (1992) report. This called for more whole-class teaching, an end of 'dogmas' about 'child-centredness' and urged acceptance of the subject-based NC as a *fait accompli.* It is seen by some teachers (wrongly perhaps) as a threat to their basic personal, practical philosophies. There is a great need here for clarification on both sides. The issue has been a matter of debate for some time. It always seems to be presented in polarised terms ('traditional-progressive', 'whole-class teaching-individual work', 'child-centred-knowledge-centred'). It surfaces and induces a moral panic every few years, featuring more politics and ideology than evidence and reasoned argument. As Alexander (1992:194) argues, therefore, there is a clear need for the application of 'conceptual and empirical tests'. Halpin (1990:31) argues for 'the development of an archive of case studies of attempts by progressive schools and teachers to sustain their existing priorities in the light of, and despite, the requirements of the Act'.

2 The NC has little to say about equality of opportunity. With the great demands on teachers of what is prescribed and the pressures on their time (Campbell and Neill 1990), there is a danger that such issues will become

marginalised. This will be exacerbated by the demise of the LEAs, some of whom have kept such issues in the forefront of policy. Equality of opportunity, therefore, needs bringing back on to the agenda.

3 The increased pressures on teachers in recent years have lent weight to theories of intensification, deskilling and demoralisation (Apple 1986). There are said to be crises of confidence in professional knowledge and in the teacher role. Some fear the loss of work that is most meaningful to

them (Lawn and Grace 1987; Nias 1989). There are three implications here for this book:

(a) If the research helps teachers to articulate their ‘personal, practical philosophies’ (Connelly and Clandinin 1985) and to evaluate what they consider to be their best work, it might help, to some degree, to restore confidence.

(b) Through the strong representation of teacher voice in the book, teachers may be encouraged to defy any ‘technical-rationalist’ threat in recent developments and to develop their roles as ‘reflective practitioners’ (Schon 1983).

(c) Points (a) and (b) might help teachers accept and act upon the points of criticism advanced in the book, which will be offered in a balanced, constructive, and collegial spirit.

Readership

All those—teachers, students, governors, inspectors, academics, teacher trainers—involved in

1 Early years’ education
2 Primary education
3 The teaching of bilingual children and minority ethnic groups.

We would envisage the book being used for professional studies, policy studies and educational research components of initial and inservice courses for teachers; also management training initiatives in education, for example the new government sponsored deputy head teacher and head teacher training schemes.

Level

We aim to present a highly readable book, soundly based in academic research, but aimed at practitioners and policy-makers rather than academics. We would hope that it would be a recommended text on courses for student teachers in the areas indicated.

Competing books

We are not aware of any other book that represents the young bilingual child’s point of view, or studies these subjects at this school level, in such fine detail.

Length and timetable

We would aim for a maximum of 80,000 words, the text to be completed by 28 February 1998.

Authors

Peter Woods is Professor of Education at the Open University. He is the author of numerous books and articles on education and research methods. He is the director of the research project on which this book is based.

Mari Boyle is a Research Fellow at the Open University. She has taught in primary school. She has a master's degree in Computer Based Information Systems. She has published and made conference presentations in the area of teachers' and pupils' work in lower schools.

Nick Hubbard is a former primary school head teacher. He is a school governor and school consultant. He has a master's degree in Child-Meaningful Learning in Two Nursery Settings.

Structure and contents

Introduction

This will explain the nature of the research on which the book is based. We discuss how the research sought to develop previous research on 'creative teaching and learning' with reference to the experiences of young bilingual children at the very beginning of their educational careers. Apart from promising to illuminate the theory on 'creative teaching and learning' in particular ways, the subject contains a number of issues of current concern, such as the adequacy of, and access, for all pupils, to the National Curriculum; methods of teaching in the early years; providing for diverse cultures and languages; inducting the learner into the system; and relationships between school and community.

We shall outline the methods of the research, schools and personnel involved.

(There followed 1 ,000-word summaries of each of these chapters)

Chapter 1	Curriculum and culture
Chapter 2	Teaching approaches and methods
Chapter 3	The children's perspective
Chapter 4	The parent's perspective
Chapter 5	The educational significance of books and stories for bilingual children
Chapter 6	Bilingual children in transition
Chapter 7	The social and cultural worlds of the children
Chapter 8	Recommendations for policy and practice

(There followed a number of extended examples illustrating points made in the outlines of the chapters.)

Figure 7.4 Specimen book proposal

The book eventually appeared like this:

Introduction
Chapter 1 Teacher perspectives (Chapter 2 above)
Chapter 2 Teaching the National Curriculum (Chapter 1 above)
Chapter 3 Creative teaching (a new chapter, suggested as we reanalysed the material)
Chapter 4 The educational significance of stories (Chapter 5 above)
Chapter 5 Bilingual children in transition (Chapter 6 above)
Chapter 6 Children's perspectives (Chapter 3 above)
Chapter 7 Children's identities (Chapter 7 above)
Chapter 8 Parents' perspectives (Chapter 4 above)

The logic of this was that the first four chapters were about teachers and teaching, the next three about children, and the last about parents. We decided to make suggestions for policy and practice at the end of each chapter, so the old Chapter 8 disappeared.

In conclusion, I quote from the DfEE's (Standards and Effectiveness Unit 1998) document on the National Literacy Strategy, 'Framework for teaching':

Literate primary pupils should:

- Read and write with confidence, fluency and understanding
- Understand the sound and spelling system and use this to read and spell accurately
- Have an interest in words and their meanings and a growing vocabulary
- Know, understand and be able to write in a range of genres
- Plan, draft, revise and edit their own writing
- Be interested in books, read with enjoyment and evaluate and justify their preferences
- Through reading and writing, develop their powers of imagination, inventiveness and critical awareness.

Here is a recipe for us all!

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